


**THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN INCLUSIVE APPROACH IN
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN NAMIBIA**

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted at any University for a degree.

Signature

Date

SUMMARY

Early childhood education is an investment that can offer outstanding returns. It can ensure that all children receive the education that is their right. One cannot talk of access to quality education for all if children with special needs in early childhood and pre-primary education are not given the same opportunities. Equally, the right to access to early childhood education becomes elusive if government spends very little of its resources on early childhood education. At present many children in Namibia are denied access to early childhood education due to poverty, disability, diseases or hindrances. Within formal education, children with special needs do poorly, fail classes or drop out of school at a very early age. As a result, they become further marginalised in society. Their lack of education could also make them a burden on society.

The study was guided by the questions: a) what are the implications of the implementation of inclusive early childhood education both internationally as well as in Namibia?; b) what is the current situation in Namibia regarding the functioning of early childhood education centres with specific reference to the perceptions and preferences of early childhood educators in the overall process of educating children with special needs, and c) what guidelines can be offered to the ministries responsible for education and for the welfare of children for the development of an inclusive early childhood education in Namibia?

First a review of literature on early childhood education and inclusive education approaches was undertaken. Next a quantitative survey research method was used to obtain answers to the research questions. Of the 650 respondents to whom it was sent, 493 early childhood educators from all the 13 regions in Namibia completed the questionnaire.

The study was based on an ecosystemic approach to inclusive education in which the entire community and all the stakeholders are involved in contributing

to quality early childhood education at a school where diversity is valued and every effort is made to maximise the quality of life of all children.

The research findings indicate that early childhood educators in Namibia have not received the necessary training for their role as ECD educators nor do they possess the necessary qualifications or skills for inclusive education approaches. The findings also indicate that the majority of early childhood educators are not aware of the national ECD policy nor do they have much knowledge of what an inclusive curriculum entails. It is clear that Inclusive education requires a paradigm shift and the transformation of the education sector in order to ensure that all children have equal access to quality education.

This study recommends that there be closer collaboration between the ministry responsible for education as well as that dealing with child welfare in the development of an inclusive education policy covering all levels of the education sector from early childhood to tertiary and higher education. It is further recommended that curriculum reform be effected to ensure that the curriculum becomes inclusive, reflecting the needs of all children and acknowledging individual differences as opportunities to learn rather than barriers to learning and participation.

OPSOMMING

Opvoeding in die kinderjare is 'n belegging wat uitstaande resultate kan oplewer. Dit kan verseker dat alle kinders die opvoeding ontvang waartoe hulle geregtig is. 'n Mens kan nie praat van toegang tot kwaliteit onderrig vir alle kinders as kinders met spesiale behoeftes in hul vroeë kinderjare en pre-primêre opvoeding nie toegang tot dieselfde geleenthede het nie. Terselfdertyd word die reg van opvoeding in die vroeë kinderjare 'n onverwesenlikbare begrip as 'n regering min van sy finansiële hulpbronne beskikbaar stel vir dié doel. Tans word baie kinders in Namibië van hierdie reg ontnem weens armoede, gestremdheid, siektes en ander struikelblokke. Binne formele opvoeding presteer kinders met spesiale behoeftes nie na wense nie, druipe klasse of verlaat die skool op 'n vroeë ouderdom. As gevolg hiervan word hulle meer en meer gemarginaliseer binne die samelewing. Hulle gebrek aan opvoeding kan selfs daartoe lei dat hulle 'n las vir die samelewing word.

Die studie is gelei deur die vrae: a) wat is die implikasies van die implementering van omvattende opvoeding in die vroeë kinderjare in die internasionale- en binne die konteks van Namibië?; b) wat is die huidige stand van sake in Namibië wat betref die funksionering van sentrums vir opvoeding in die vroeë kinderjare met spesifieke verwysing na die persepsies en voorkeure van opvoeders in die globale proses van die verskaffing van vroeë opvoeding aan kinders met spesiale behoeftes?, en c) watter riglyne kan aan die Ministerie, verantwoordelik vir die welsyn van kinders voorgestel word wat omvattende opvoeding in die vroeë kinderjare in Namibië ten doel kan hê? Eerstens is 'n oorsig van literatuur oor vroeë kinder- en omvattende opvoeding onderneem. Daarna is gebruik gemaak van 'n kwantitatiewe vraelysnavorsingsmetode om antwoorde op die navorsingsvrae te kry. Van die 650 respondente vir wie vraelyste gestuur is, het 493 vroeë kinderopvoeders vanuit al dertien die streke in Namibië die vraelyste voltooi.

Die studie is gebaseer op 'n ekosistemiese benadering tot omvattende opvoeding waarbinne die hele gemeenskap en al die rolspelers betrokke was by die voorsiening van kwaliteit vroeë opvoeding in 'n skool waar diversiteit 'n gewaardeerde waarde is en waarbinne alle maatreëls getref word om te verseker dat die kinders die maksimum lewenskwaliteit geniet.

Die navorsingsbevindinge dui aan dat vroeë kinderopvoeders in Namibië nie die nodige opleiding ontvang het om hulle toe te rus vir hul rol as VKO opvoeders nie, en dat hulle ook nie oor die nodige kwalifikasies of vaardighede beskik wat nodig is vir die inklusiewe benadering tot vroeë kinderopvoeding nie. Die bevindinge dui verder ook aan dat die grootste persentasie van vroeë kinderopvoeders nie bewus is van die nasionale VKO beleid nie, en ook nie die kennis het oor wat dié kurrikulum behels nie. Dit is duidelik dat omvattende opvoeding 'n paradigmaskuif en die transformasie van die opvoedingssektor gaan nodig hê om te verseker dat alle kinders gelyke toegang tot kwaliteit opvoeding kan geniet.

Die studie maak die aanbeveling dat daar 'n nouer samewerking tussen die Ministeries verantwoordelik vir opvoeding en vir die algemene welsyn van kinders moet wees om 'n omvattende opvoedingsbeleid daar te stel wat alle vlakke van die opvoedingssektor, vanaf vroeë kinderjare tot tersiêre en hoër onderwys insluit. Dit word verder voorgestel dat die kurrikulum aangepas word om die omvattende aard van opvoeding te reflekteer en dat die behoeftes van alle kinders met inagneming van individuele verskille gesien moet word as geleenthede om te leer, eerder as wat dit beskou sal word as struikelblokke in die weg van leer en deelname.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my sons Vasco and Pandeni.

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Aune Nangula Naanda

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ACRONYMS

ECD	Early Childhood Development
ETSIP	Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme
GRN	Government of the Republic of Namibia
HCEEA	Handicapped Children's Early Education Act (PL90-538)
IECD	Integrated Early Childhood Development
ICTs	Information Communication Technologies
MBEC	Ministry of Basic Education and Culture
MBESC	Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture
MED	Ministry of Education
MOHSS	Ministry of Health and Social Services
MRLGH	Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing
MWACW	Ministry of Women Affairs and Child Welfare
NDP 1	National Development Plan 1
NDP II	Second National Development Plan
NAEYC	National Association for the Education of Young Children
NECDC	National Early Childhood Development Committee
NEPI	National Policy Investigation
NGO	Non –governmental Organization
NIED	National Institute for Educational Development
NPA	National Program of Action for the Children of Namibia
NPC	National Planning Commission
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Since independence on 21 March 1990, the Namibian Government has been confronted with an enormous challenge: to address the socio-economic and other imbalances, including a poor education system inherited from the South African colonial Government. The legacy of the apartheid system is still felt in present-day Namibia. This is reflected in the educational provisions for, and outcomes of, learners especially in the previously black schools, communities and rural schools. A minority of the population received a first-world education while the greater part of the population, namely the black population, received a limited education aimed at restricting choice and opportunity. Fifteen years into Namibia's independence, the majority of black schools are still faced with the issue of having to cope with unqualified or under-qualified teachers, lack of teaching/learning resources, lack of new information communication technologies (ICTs), poorly equipped libraries and laboratories and poor communication facilities (Ministry of Basic Education, Sports and Culture, 2003; Presidential Commission on Education, Culture and Training, 1999:11-12).

Soon after independence, the Government immediately identified a number of challenges facing the education sector in Namibia in order to address past imbalances. These include the need to reform the education system to make it relevant to the needs of Namibia and its people, setting up programmes aimed at reducing levels of poverty and addressing the issues of unemployment, especially among the youth, and sustaining economic growth. Article 20 of the

Constitution (1990:12) clearly states that every person residing in Namibia *shall have the right to education*. This implies that everyone, irrespective of their age, abilities or disabilities, environmental, cultural or social backgrounds should benefit from an education of a good quality. Similarly, in line with the international conventions and in particular the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 15 (page 11) of the Namibian Constitution focuses specifically on the rights of children, and declares their right to survival, protection and development.

Namibia signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child on 8 September 1990, and ratified the *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography* on 16 April 2002. The country has also committed itself to the Millennium Development Goals and to achieving the Dakar Framework of Action by 2015. A number of laws concerning children in Namibia are in the process of being passed. Amongst these are the Child Law and Protection Bill and the Children's Status Bill (Hubbard, 2002; Ministry of Basic Education, Sports and Culture, 2003; UN in Namibia, 2003).

Furthermore, in order to meet the needs of all children in Namibia, the Ministry of Education, following the policy in the document entitled *Towards Education for All: A Development Brief for Education, Culture and Training* (1993), places emphasis on access, equity, quality and democracy within the education system. Equally, the National Early Childhood Development Policy of 1996, the Report of the Presidential Commission on Education, Culture and Training of 1999 reflect the determination of the Namibian society to equip children with new skills so they can cope with the new challenges and technological demands of life in the twenty first century. The same principles are reflected in the Strategic Plan for the Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme (ETSIP) 2005 – 2020 of the Government of Namibia (Government of Namibia, 2005). The underlying principle is to ensure that people not only benefit from education as their constitutional right but also benefit from quality education throughout their lives.

The new expanded vision of the World Conference of Education for All (UNESCO, 2000), of which Namibia is a signatory, emphasises that education is not just literacy and numeracy but a lifelong process, which begins before birth and continues throughout life. Similarly, the World Declaration on Education (2000) highlighted a number of challenges to be addressed at the national level:

- Universal access and equity - providing each child with an opportunity to be successful at school.
- Creating a stimulating environment - in which a child can grow up through positive parental attitudes.
- Broadening the basic education messages to benefit not only the child but also the whole family.
- Enhancing the environment for child learning with the family as the first environment and with teachers as supporters.
- Strengthening partnerships amongst home, the school and the community.

The importance of an education system that includes all learners in Namibia is promoted in various government documents and policies. For example, the National Early Childhood Development Policy of 1996 refers to equitable access to early childhood education for young children and stresses the support services such children should receive:

While the aim is to provide universal attention to young children, there is special recognition of children living in conditions that put them at increased risk of delayed or debilitated development. This strategy recognizes the need for all children to be supported as they grow and develop, while stressing the urgency of attending to children living in poverty or those who are discriminated against as a result of disability and, or ethnicity (1996:30).

The Minister of Basic Education, Sports and Culture, during his official opening remarks at a Workshop on Inclusive Education in Namibia (1997:7), clearly emphasised the importance of inclusive education within the context of Education

for All; all learners should be embraced and considered as important members of schools and communities. The Early Childhood Development Policy identifies those children who should benefit from inclusive education as children who are victims of war, poverty, overcrowded housing, inadequate food supply, polluted water, lack of sanitary facilities and isolation, and those children who may suffer from any preventable diseases (Republic of Namibia, 1996). The statement reflects the Government's commitment to address diversity and barriers to education, as part of an overall reform of the educational system. It calls upon the education sector to respond to the diverse needs of learners, within a well-coordinated integrated holistic system approach. All children, regardless of their different circumstances, have common needs. Children who are psychologically or mentally disturbed, or who are physically disabled or have other disabilities have distinct special educational needs, which should equally be catered for. Only by extending education and care to all those children who need special assistance which many families cannot provide, will the government be able to respond effectively to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and many other national and international instruments calling for the care of children, especially those in need of special educational and health services.

In 2001 the number of people living with disabilities in Namibia was around 85,576 or 4,5% of the total population with higher numbers in rural than urban areas. The disabilities recorded were physical disabilities 37,6%, blind 34,0%, hearing impairments 21,4%, speech impairments 11,4% and mental disabilities 5,6%. Women represented 51,3% of the total population of all people living with disabilities. The regions with the largest concentration of people living with disabilities are Ohangwena, Kavango and Omusati, representing 5,5%, 5,5% and 6.4% of their population respectively. Although children with disabilities have a right to education, Vision 2030 confirms that children with disabilities are often not sent to school because of the negative perceptions about their ability to perform academically while teachers are equally not prepared to teach these children (2001 Population and Housing Census; Möwes, 2002; Republic of Namibia, 2004).

Like primary and secondary education, early childhood education (ECD) in Namibia is characterised by the inequalities created by the system of apartheid. There are great imbalances in terms of the provisions of early childhood education in Namibia. While some early childhood education services provide first-world quality education, others provide very poor quality education. Quality care in ECD centres is a far fetched dream in rural areas and settlements while in some, especially in the previously white centres, early childhood education services are provided in well-constructed classroom structures, with safe playgrounds, plenty of educational materials and well-qualified teachers. At the other end of the continuum, there are over-crowded and dilapidated centres with little or no educational materials, no proper playgrounds, if at all any, and teaching staff who have received no education to deal with children (Republic of Namibia, 1996; 2004), especially those with special needs.

By the time the Dissertation was written, ECD fell under the Directorate of Community and Early Childhood Development in the Ministry of Women Affairs and Child Welfare (MWACW), which was the driving force for child development in Namibia. However, since 21 March 2005, the Ministry of Women Affairs and Child Welfare was abolished by the second President of the Republic of Namibia and a new Ministry, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare created. Early Childhood falls under the same Directorate of Community and Childhood Development in the newly created Ministry. The Directorate continues to co-ordinate ECD activities, advocates the involvement of parents and communities in early childhood development and education programmes for children up to 6 years old and supports the strengthening and creation of ECD centres. However, discussions are underway to keep the responsibility for the age group 0 – 4 within the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare and to move the age group 5 – 6 (pre-primary education) to the Ministry of Education.

Equally, the Ministry of Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture (MBESC) was abolished and new a Ministry, Ministry of Education, created on 21 March 2005. The Ministry of Education does not cater for early childhood education in

its policies, however, regarding the training of early childhood educators and the development of curriculum, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare will continue to work with the Ministry of Education through the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED). The management and coordination of policy implementation, especially with regard to the training of ECD educators is still not clearly defined between the two Ministries. The MWACW had identified ECD as an important component within its Ministry to be addressed in an integrated and holistic manner and the new Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare continues to address such issues. The importance of quality education for children is a prime concern for the Directorate of Community and Early Childhood Development. Another concern of the Ministry is the impact of HIV and AIDS on children between 0 and 6 years who fall under the category of orphans and other vulnerable children (OVC). With an increase in the number of orphans and other vulnerable children in Namibia, mechanisms to address challenges facing these children, including their access to education and health provisions should be put in place. Although efforts have been made to build the capacities of ECD educators, more needs to be done in terms of improving their skills so they are better able to cope with the demands of all the children who have special needs due to their vulnerabilities (MWACW Annual Report 2002).

Although considerable efforts such as those that have been outlined are being made to strengthen early childhood education in the country, it is interesting to note that the *Education Act 16 of 2001*, does not make any reference to early childhood education. Where such reference is made, it refers to the Minister's prerogative to provide technical and financial support, including programmes and materials to registered early childhood education centres, upon request (Hubbard, 2002).

The Second National Development Plan of Namibia NDP2 (2001/2002 – 2005/2006: 403), addresses the issue of how to ensure equity, sustainability and empowerment along with basic human development. It states that the expansion of access and services to education for marginalized children, as well as for

children with special needs in education, has lagged behind the general increase in enrolment rates in relation to other groups of learners despite the development of special schools in some regions in the country. Problems related to access in education for these groups of learners range from policy issues to curriculum issues, and include poverty, the impact of HIV and AIDS and children with special needs in education (Möwes, 2002; Zimba, Mostert, Hengari, Haihambo-Mwetudhana, Möwes and Mwoombola, 2002).

As mentioned earlier, education in Namibia should be as inclusive as possible in order to ensure access for all those children that were not previously catered for by the education system as well as those that may not necessarily have benefited since their special needs were not adequately addressed. However, it is important to point out that inclusion is much more than a place; rather it represents a set of values which guide educational decisions, frame teacher education and give children the opportunity to grow and develop as responsible future citizens. Inclusion is concerned with educational equity and the establishment and maintenance of high quality education: education must not be compromised at the expense of children, including those in early childhood education, who need special attention (Giangreco, Baumgart and Doyle, 1995; Donald, 1996; Engelbrecht, 1999; Kaoma, 2004).

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As discussed in the Introduction (1.1), the Namibian Government and its people see education as a priority in contributing to human and social development and economic sustainability. In order to address disparities in education, all citizens, including children should benefit equally and a comprehensive approach to quality education for all, including early childhood education and development within inclusive school settings, must form a major part of future efforts to alleviate inequitable distribution of educational resources while promoting sustainable development.

In addressing quality education for younger children in Namibia, Vision 2030 (2004:96) states that:

By providing children a fairer and better start in life, ECD programs have positive long-term benefits, including gains on the future learning potential, educational attainment and adult productivity. Improving early childhood development also to promote social and gender equity. It helps to break the vicious cycle of poverty in two ways- by giving support to women and older girls, allowing them to earn and learn, and by providing children with a better base to draw upon in later years.

Vision 2030 recognises the importance of addressing early childhood education needs as early as possible. Research indicates (Evans, Myers and Ilfeld, 2000; Freeman, Swick and Brown, 1999; Gilley and Gilley, 1980) that early childhood education provides long term benefits such as raising children's abilities at primary school, increasing early and later achievements, reducing repetition and drop out rates and preparing children with special needs for early intervention. However, only limited research has been undertaken on the provision of education to children with special needs in ECD in Namibia and the development of inclusive educational practices in this regard. This study will specifically focus on early childhood education in Namibia including a survey of the functioning on ECD centres and the perceptions of ECD educators regarding children with special needs in early childhood education in Namibia. Results obtained from the study will be used as the basis to developing guidelines for the Ministry responsible for the welfare of children for effective inclusive education in ECD in Namibia.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following questions will be addressed in the research and, thus, form the basis of the study:

1. What are the implications of the implementation of inclusive education for early childhood education both internationally as well as in Namibia?
2. What is the current situation in Namibia regarding the functioning of early childhood education centres with specific reference to the perceptions and preferences of early childhood educators in the overall process of educating children with special educational needs?
3. The nature of guidelines to be offered to the ministries responsible for education and for the welfare of children for the development of an inclusive approach in early childhood education in Namibia.

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The aim of the study will be to examine current educational issues, policies, practices, trends and needs of learners faced with barriers to early childhood education in Namibia and to provide guidelines for the development of inclusive early childhood education in Namibia. This will be done with the help of a survey of early childhood educators and a description of the identified special needs these children are faced with as well as the educational services they are receiving. Since a relatively small proportion of young children (Möwes, 2002, Population and Housing Census, 2001) are attending early childhood centres in Namibia, this study will also endeavour to determine the barriers that restrict the enrolment of those children with special needs in early childhood education programmes. It will also clarify the challenges faced in the existing early childhood centres that prevent children with special needs from attending and participating successfully in early childhood education.

At a practical level, guidelines for developing an inclusive education approach will be proposed to the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, based on the survey of the situation of early childhood education centres in Namibia. The aim of those guidelines will be to ensure that all children irrespective of their abilities, aptitudes and backgrounds benefit from early

childhood and pre-primary education in Namibia.

1.5 AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR THIS STUDY

1.5.1 Introduction

Ten years after Jomtien, UNESCO undertook an Education for All Assessment (UNESCO, 2000), in all its member States in order to see what progress has been made with regard to achieving the Jomtien Commitment on Education for All. The results of the assessment revealed that many children, including youth and adults were still not benefiting from basic education. The reasons cited were as varied as the number of countries. Some were lack of political will and commitment, instability and civil wars, whereas others were lack of resources, poverty and the impact of HIV and AIDS on the education system. Due to the nature of their educational challenges, children who were not benefiting were called various names: hard-to-teach, hard-to-reach, and the least privileged (Allington, 1994; UNESCO, 2001; UNESCO, 2004).

Perceptions of people with disabilities have been changing since the 1960s. During this period, western societies started challenging communities' perceptions of people with 'disabilities', impairments or special needs. Perceptions about people with disabilities focused on *medical, charity, lay and rights discourse* and have influenced the movements towards inclusive education in many countries, including South Africa (Naicker, 1999).

Medical discourse placed emphasis on the individual's exclusion from society as a consequence of disability. Disabilities were seen as insurmountable problems that required special schools or institutionalisation in order to control the individual's illness. Individuals with disabilities were not perceived as able to fully contribute to the well being and development of society because of their

disabilities (Naicker, 1999).

Charity discourse, although it has some similarities with medical discourse, is a more benevolent view of disability. Individuals with disabilities are regarded as people in constant need of care from 'able bodied' individuals. They are viewed as objects of pity with no real control over how they are treated or ability to make decisions concerning their well being. One could question, however, how necessary the whole industry of caring for individual with disabilities is society really is. There is little mention in charity discourse about professionals such as social workers therapists, physiotherapists, nurses, teachers and other who benefit from this type of labelling (Naicker, 1999). However, many job opportunities have been created for able-bodied people while the disabled are excluded from decision making processes and regarded as eternally child-like, regardless of their individual abilities. They have to depend on the decisions of their non-disabled colleagues.

Lay discourse embodies the popular vernacular of disabilities in which disability is viewed perceived with fear, ignorance, superstition or paternalism. Historically, people with disabilities have been victims of prejudice and exclusion based solely on their differences from what has been accepted as the norm. In some cultural beliefs disability was perceived as a "curse" or an illness from a minority of individual sufferers associated with natural causes and drew more sympathy from society to assist in reducing problems related to their disabilities. In some cases, individuals with disabilities were honoured or ridiculed, isolated from society or even exterminated (Dyson and Forlin, 1999; Engelbrecht, 1996; Lerner, 1993; Möwes, 2001; Naicker, 1999).

Rights discourse gained a strong acceptance in the international community, through the World Conference on Education held in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990, and the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994). The Salamanca Framework for Action (UNESCO, 1994) focused on the importance of providing a comprehensive healthy early

childhood education to children before the age of six and to ensure that educational services are extended to children with special needs in education. It stated in Article 53 that:

The success of the inclusive school depends considerably on early identification, assessment and stimulation of the very young child with special educational needs. Every childcare and education programme for children aged up to six years ought to be developed and/or reoriented to promote physical, intellectual and social development and school readiness.

Programmes at this level should recognize the principle of inclusion and be developed in a comprehensive way by combining pre-school activities and early childhood health care (UNESCO, 1994:33).

At these Conferences, Member States of the United Nations emphasised on the right to education and inclusive education so that children with special needs in education are included in equally the same educational provisions as their peers without special needs. The rights approach calls for the total integration in school and society of learners with special needs in education. At the national level, the rights discourse gained prominence in the national documents such as the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia, in particular Articles 10, 15 and 20, the National ECD Policy of 1996, the EFA National Plan of Action, 2002 – 2015 and Vision 2030. In addition to other fundamental rights, the Constitution acknowledges the best interest of the child as a guiding standard for childcare matters, while Vision 2030 calls for the education of all children irrespective of their gender, race or abilities. Rights discourse is based on the belief that all human beings regardless of their physical attributes have the right to equal opportunity, self-reliance, independence and wants as opposed to needs. It nurtures qualities of tolerance, acceptance and respect for the self and others and mutual understanding (Engelbrecht, Green, Naicker, Engelbrecht, 1999; Engelbrecht, 1996; Forlin; 1997 and Möwes, 2002).

1.5.2 Phases in the Development of Inclusive Education Approaches

The philosophy of normalisation initiated the movement towards inclusive education and specifically placed emphasis on the physical inclusion of children with disabilities into mainstream education. It was introduced in the Scandinavian countries (Wolfensberger, 1972) to provide individual with disabilities the same rights and learning opportunities, freedoms as those extended to individuals without disabilities. Normalisation closely parallels the rights discourse for people with disabilities. The approach was in line with the general shift within society to recognise people with disabilities as capable individuals and recognises the importance of providing individuals with disabilities the least restrictive education settings. It promoted the autonomy and individual choices where children with disabilities are integrated in mainstream settings with minimum separate educational facilities (Engelbrecht, 1999; Kochhar, West and Taymans, 2000).

Normalisation was followed by the so-called integration approach which, has been used to describe processes by which individual children with special needs were encouraged to participate in mainstream education, with limited additional support arrangements for individual learners with special needs in education. These learners were placed either in special or regular classrooms where they could participate in *some* activities with their peers without special needs. They were expected to '*fit into*' the system rather than adapting the system to address their individual special needs. The integration movement was not perceived as being positive because although people with disabilities were integrated in society, it was expected that they should adapt to society's norms of who they should be (Ainscow, 1994,1998; Casaer and Ranschaert, 1998; Engelbrecht, 1999; Hewitt, 1999; Kochhar, West and Taymans 2000).

Inclusion goes beyond mainstream and special education and embraces the wider notion of societal values and attitudes towards diversity, education for all and lifelong learning (Booth 1999:101). It includes a healthy school environment,

professional teacher development, changing society's perceptions about school, curriculum reform and involves bringing educational support services to the learner with much emphasis placed on both teaching and learning in order to overcome barriers in the education system (Engelbrecht, 1999; Farrell, 2000:154; Idol, 1997:385; Hewitt, 1999:134; Miller 1996:20; Muthukrishna, 2000). Within the inclusion context, diversity is natural and brings challenges into societies and communities. In fact, an inclusive philosophy and society perceives classrooms and communities as incomplete if learners with special needs are not welcome. Inclusion means that:

...schools should accommodate all learners regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled or gifted learners, street and working learners, learners from remote or nomadic populations, learners from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and learners from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups (UNESCO, 1994:59)

Dyson (2000) notes that there are varieties of notions of inclusion. He refers to them as, firstly, **inclusion as placement**, which emanates from the integration approach. Secondly, he refers to **inclusion as education** for all, which has been promoted by UNESCO since the World Conference on Education in 1990, and the Salamanca Conference in which emphasis is placed on schools serving all children. Thirdly, there is the view of **inclusion as participation**, which is based on the notion of equal participation in education and social inclusion, which stresses the notion of belonging to wider communities and the nation at large. The different varieties of inclusion explained by Dyson focus on the rights-based approach to education for learners with special educational needs and they take into account the role of the learner, the school and society in providing an enabling environment to assist all children in their move to maturity and along the path of lifelong learning.

While inclusion considers societal values and attitudes towards diversity,

inclusive education embraces the wider concept of teaching all learners, including those with disabilities or other social challenges. Inclusion is a broader notion of education reform encompassing social and economic policies according to the principle of social justice and human rights (Ainscow, 1995; Dyson and Forlin, 1999; Engelbrecht, 1999; Naicker, 1999; Muthukrishna, 2000).

Principles of inclusive education include:

- Schools valuing learners and including them in all aspects of school life;
- Learners being prepared for life outside school where socialising between learners is encouraged not only at the school level but also at the community level;
- Learners with disabilities being integrated with learners who have no disabilities in the same classroom settings;
- Respect being shown for the right of each learner to receive an individual education (Idol, 1997:385).

In discussing the right to education within the context of inclusive education, Farrell (2000) asks whose right should be considered in inclusive settings. Should the educator consider the right of the individual child, the teacher, the parent or the whole classroom within the school? The child with special needs in education is at the centre of inclusive educational settings and it is his or her rights that are to be considered. The right of each child to be provided with quality education and to be taught in a favourable environment is certainly a right, which should not to be denied to children because of their diverse educational needs. Equally, such a right should be extended to receiving the best type of education that prepares the child for his or her future life as an adult.

- The rights of children with disabilities were the focus of various national and international declarations and conventions such as:
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989;
- The United Nations Convention of 1960 Against Discrimination and Education;
- The Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons of 1975;

- The United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons (1983 – 1992);
- The International Year of Disabled Persons (1981);
- The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990);
- The Salamanca Framework and Statement for Action (1994).

In principle, the rights of such children were protected by all of these international Conventions, Declarations and Decades and Years. The Convention on the Rights of the Child is of particular interest. It provides a foundation for education to be regarded as a basic human right and recognises it as a right to be achieved progressively based on equal opportunities for all learners. Countries that have been advancing the concept of inclusion are those that promote equality where members of society participate in a meaningful way and have opportunities to join in collective experiences.

In addition, it recognises the fact that any child can experience challenges that may be short-term or long-term at any time during his or her schooling career. It calls for educational planners and policy makers to interpret the broad principles of inclusion in the light of specific contexts and local circumstances befitting individual learners. The same rights are clearly reflected in the Index for Inclusion which points out that:

It (Inclusion) involves the specification of the direction of change. It is relevant to any school however inclusive or exclusive its current cultures, policies and practices. It requires schools to engage in a critical examination of what can be done to increase the learning and participation of the diversity of students within the school and its locality (<http://inclusion.uwe.ac.uk/csie/indexlaunch.htm>)

Proponents of inclusive education argue that it can be successful if supported by commitment to change in attitudes, policies and teaching approaches and especially if enhanced by listening to the voice of children with special needs. Waghid and Engelbrecht (2002:21) state that an inclusive education discourse should contribute to some change in people's positions in life. A number of

factors have been identified as necessary for successful inclusive education. Examples from a few prime sources are:

Ainscow (1995:152)

- Effective leadership, not only by the head teachers, but spread throughout the school.
- Staff, learners, community and parental involvement in school policies and decisions.
- A commitment to collaborative planning.
- Coordination strategies.
- Attention to the potential benefits of enquiry and reflection.
- A policy for staff development.

Lipsky and Gartner (1999: 17-18)

- All stakeholders accept the philosophy and practise of inclusive education.
- All children can learn and all children benefit when that learning is done together.
- Each child is recognised as an individual, with strengths and needs, and not labelled or viewed as a member of a category.
- Children with special needs attend schools in their neighbourhood and are equally distributed across regular classrooms.
- Support is naturally provided in general education.

Scruggs and Mastropieri (1994:794)

- Administrative support.
- Support from special educational personnel.
- Accepting a positive classroom atmosphere.
- Appropriate curriculum.
- Effective general teaching skills.
- Peer assistance.

The South African view of inclusive education considers the important role of

families, communities and non-governmental organization in inclusive education.

Naicker (1999:19-21)

- A single education system.
- The need for support services which ensures a number of options for the provision of education.
- Support services with educators with specialised competencies, parents, communities, homes, NGOs and dedicated posts of personnel.
- Human resource development.
- All learners perform successfully but not at the same pace.
- Each successful learning experience build to more success.
- Schools are fundamental in creating the conditions for success at school.

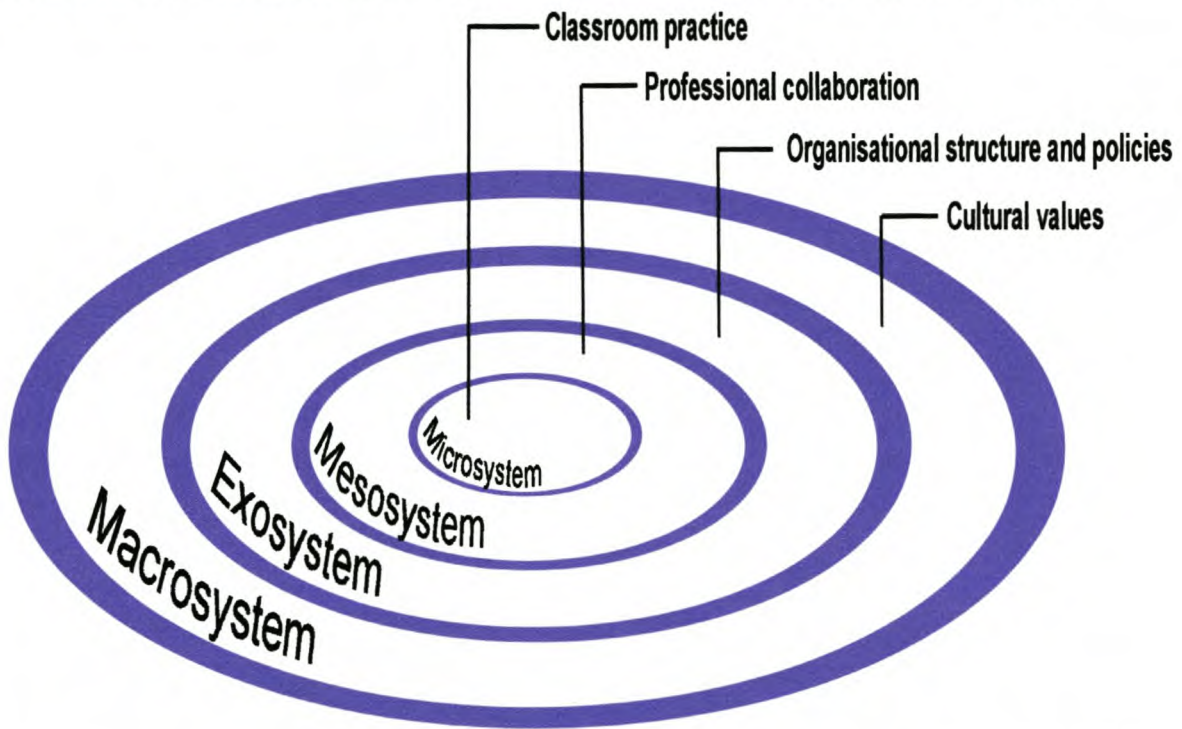
1.5.3 A Holistic Approach to Inclusive Education: An Ecosystemic Approach

Discussions on inclusion and inclusive education are based on the understanding of how individuals function and interact within the broader framework of societies. Bronfenbrenner (1979) referred to the ecology of human development when he indicated that human development is influenced by factors operating at different systems levels within a broad, ecological structure, namely the *microsystem*, the *mesosystem*, the *exosystem* and the *macro-system*. The initial application of the ecosystemic approach was made by Bronfenbrenner (1979), focusing on the context and the transactions between the systems that impact on early childhood development, while Trickett and associates, looked at it from the perspective of the environment (Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana, 2002; Eloff, 2001; Stormshak and Dishion, 2002; Trickett, Kelly and Todd, 1972). According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), childrens' social adaptation can be understood as embedded within multiple relationships and contexts (home, school, peers, family and the society at large), and within that concept his ecological model clarified four interacting dimensions crucial to understanding child development:

- Person factors (child temperament);
- Process factors (forms of interaction occurring in a family);
- Context (family, school, or local community);
- Time (changes over time in the child or the environment).

Interactions that occur between the child and his environment are very important in shaping the child's lasting development aspects. Any challenge facing the child will have to be addressed within the framework of interaction between that child as an individual and the complex environment surrounding such a child (the child's needs versus the demands of the environment). The ecosystemic framework calls for communities to endorse the inclusion of children with disabilities in everyday community activities (Bronfenbrenner, 1976; Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana, 2002; Engelbrecht, 1999; Peck, 1993) and calls for society to move towards systems that are constantly interacting with one another and where different systems level have an influence on other parts of the system.

Dynamic interaction refers to the situation in which the individual is not perceived as static but as interacting fully with organizations surrounding him or her. Changes will occur because of the interaction among the systems within the organisation. In inclusive education, the needs of the individual child will be taken into account due to the active interactions that exist between the child, his or her home, the schools and the wider community. For example, in observing a child with special needs in education, the teacher is expected to view that child holistically and to consider the variables and complex factors interacting with such a child as well as with the child's family and beyond the family. These special needs should be viewed as operating simultaneously within the *biological, intrapsychological, ecological and metaphysical systems* (Kriegler; 1989). These different levels reciprocally influence one another, as shown in Figure 1.2.

FIGURE 1.1 ELEMENTS OF AN ECOSYSTEMIC FRAMEWORK TO ECD

[Adapted from Odom, Peck, Hanson, Beckman, Kaiser, Lieber, Brown, Horn and Schwartz: <http://www.newhorizons.org>]

The micro-system relates to the child's immediate environment and the factors affecting or that might be affected by the child. In an inclusive ECD setting, for example, the teacher may identify effects of inclusion on the development of the child with special needs. Research has documented the positive contributions of children with disabilities at the early childhood education level to inclusive programs (Evans, *et al.*, 2000; Gilley and Gilley, 1980; Hurst, 1998; Mallory, 1994; Peck, 1993). At the level of the mesosystem the child's development in an inclusive setting is viewed against a number of situations in which the child actively participates, such as the relations between home, school and peer groups. Furthermore, how the child's family interacts with the early childhood education centre and how such a relationship affects inclusion is also considered. Similarly, how children with disabilities relate to peers in the classroom setting may affect relationships outside class (e.g., invitations to birthday parties or play at weekends). The relationship amongst the educators

and other professionals who work with children with disabilities is also a part of the *mesosystem*. The environment in the *exosystem* may not necessarily involve the child with special needs as an active participant. It considers the events that occur that may influence or are influenced by what is happening in the domains of the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana, 1997; Peck, 1993). The ECD centre, for example, provides an example of an *exosystem* setting, how the centre is organized, for instance, can affect program implementation (teaching approaches, classroom environment, teaching learning materials). Other examples of factors operating at the *exosystem* level include formal and informal national policies of school systems, policies that guide the implementation of ECD programmes that link policy developers (Ministry responsible for child welfare, MED, NIED, Regional Community Liaison Officers, ECD Centres). Bronfenbrenner (1976:26) defines the macro system as:

consistencies in the form and content of lower-order systems that exist at the level of the subculture or the culture as a whole, along with any belief system or ideology underlying such consistencies.

An ecosystemic approach to inclusive education has gone beyond the simplistic concept of special needs in education as a medical discourse (children with disabilities) and has encapsulated the wider notion of inclusion as having to address barriers to learning (du Toit, 1996; Dyson and Forlin, 1999; Forlin, 1998; Engelbrecht, 2004; 1999). These barriers may be influenced by a number of interacting factors, both within and outside the child's environment and on different systems level (special needs, poverty, age, language, gender, educational policies). In an ecosystemic framework, the child with special educational needs is embraced and receives the special support required in order to meet his or her learning needs within the framework of a larger social group in which the child finds himself or herself.

1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

1.6.1 Research Design

According to Babbie and Mouton (2001), a research design is the “*blueprint*” of how one proposes to do the research. It is the research design that determines the research methods and procedures to be applied as determined by the nature of the research problem. The research problem can be derived from a number of factors, such as research based on a literature review to clarify a certain theory or concept, to clarify contradictory information, to correct wrong methodology, and to ensure appropriate use of statistics or to resolve conflicting opinion (Fouché, Merriam, 2002, Sax, 1979).

In this study, a survey research design within a positivist research paradigm was used. Survey research, according to Babbie and Mouton (2001:232) is probably the best method available to the social scientists interested in collecting original data for describing a population too large to be observed directly (in this instance, ECD centres in Namibia). The research approach was quantitative using closed and open-ended questionnaires (Gall, Borg and Gall, 1996). Non-experimental research does not involve the manipulation of conditions in the research setting. It aims to describe social phenomena by examining the relationship between variables rather than cause and effect relationships. It is an important means of establishing a foundation of knowledge about an uncharacterised social phenomenon, which may guide future research.

1.6.2 Methodology

1.6.2.1 Data Collection Methods

As mentioned above, the study adopts a survey research method, which is

quantitative in nature in order to obtain representative data on which to base provisions of an inclusive education in ECD in Namibia. Since it is deductive in nature, it enabled the researcher to have a better understanding of the barriers children are experiencing in accessing an inclusive early childhood education, without imposing existing expectations. The data collection methods in this case included a literature review to gather useful data from previous research both nationally and internationally. It included questionnaires (quantitative). These elicited specific responses which were analysed to obtain an overall picture of the progress toward provisions of an inclusive early childhood education in Namibia. The study provided the researcher with more information needed to finalise the survey of the current situation in early childhood education in Namibia. The results enabled the researcher to develop guidelines for the implementation of improved inclusive education in Namibia.

1.6.2.2 Population Sample

The success of the results of a study normally depends on the quality and representativeness of a population and the sample. A population is defined as a total set from which an individual or unit of the study is chosen to understand the total population, for the purpose of the study (Cohen and Manion, 1997; Strydom and Venter; 2002). Selecting a sample of participants is thus a critical step in the success of a survey to obtain accurate information reflecting the whole population. In drawing up a sample, one should be careful about the number of respondents in order to ensure reliability and validity of data. There are two types of sampling which are important in doing a survey research. The first is probability sampling, in which the probability of being selected is known. Participants in a probability sample have an equal chance of being selected. The second type is non-probability sampling. Here the probability of being selected is not known and the population sample appears to be stratified or handpicked (Borg and Gall, 1989; Mertens 1998; Oppenheim, 2002; Strydom and Venter, 2002). This method of sampling has an advantage in the sense that it will provide

the researcher with assurance of having a broader sampling throughout the population and thus resulting in a more accurate sample. This method of sampling also results in a considerable saving of work for the researcher due to the convenience of the selection procedure.

The current study used two methods of sampling, namely systematic sampling and purposive sampling. A request was made to the MWACW to distribute the questionnaires on behalf of the researcher. Firstly, the researcher requested the Ministry of Women Affairs and Child Welfare to use a systematic sampling method to distribute 650 questionnaires to each 5th ECD centre in all the 13 education regions in Namibia and to each 3rd teacher in those centres. This was basically in order to ensure that each centre as well as teacher will have an equal chance of being selected for the study. Secondly, there was purposive sampling in selecting the *Heads* of the ECD centres. Drawing the participants from all the regions provided the researcher the opportunity to obtain information that was representative of the whole ECD population. This method also provided the population being studied with an equal opportunity to be selected, thus reducing some bias in the results (Cohen and Manion, 1987:99, Möwes, 2002). Specifically identifying the heads of the ECD centres was intended to provide the researcher with critical information on the relevant qualifications; their knowledge about the National ECD policy and curriculum in place, and whether such curriculum reflected an inclusive approach. It is important to point out that no programme will be successfully implemented if there is no support and involvement from the school managers in the whole process of education and reform.

1.6.2.3 Procedure

The questionnaire was pilot-tested on 5 respondents all based in the Windhoek region, which included one ECD Coordinator in the Ministry of Women Affairs and Child Welfare, two ECD educators from a private ECD centre in Windhoek, a

statistician from the NEPRU and a colleague from the UNESCO Windhoek Office. Suggestions related to the questionnaire mainly concerned language construction, typographic errors and ambiguity with reference to some of the questions.

Improvements were made on the first questionnaire before its distribution to 650 systematic sampled centres in all 13 education regions. An explanatory note was provided to the ECD Coordinator in the MWACW to clarify the purpose of the study and to ensure confidentiality. The questionnaires were distributed to the Regional ECD Coordinators who collected them on behalf of the researcher and forwarded them to the MWACW in Windhoek.

1.6.2.4 Data Analysis

The process of data analysis and report writing are the most challenging area of research (Cohen and Manion, 1987). This process calls for considerable creativity and resourcefulness as well as a critical mindset. All questionnaires were entered on spreadsheet designed by the University of Stellenbosch Centre for Statistical Consultation. They were analysed quantitatively, using the computerised statistical analysis programme **Statistica v6** with support services from the Centre for Statistical Consultation at the University of Stellenbosch.

Data were analysed according to a) qualifications and number of teaching years, b) rural situations versus urban domain. Then by looking at the independent variables it was possible to distinguish knowledge of ECD educators about inclusive education. By looking at the dependent variables, it was possible to judge whether or not the inclusive education policies were in place, whether parents and the community were participating in ECD, and whether the necessary resources were in place.

1.7 ETHICAL ISSUES

At the centre of all research is the issue of ethical considerations. All research should be conducted under acceptable standards of behaviour (Gall, Borg and Gall, 1996:96; Lofland and Lofland, 1995:26; and Sax 1979:365-367). Lofland and Lofland (1995:26), further contend that:

Ethical problems, questions, and dilemmas are an integral part of the research experience as much as they are a part of the experience of everyday life.

The researcher should be well informed about the subject matter in which the research is being conducted. It is equally important to ensure that participants in the study are well informed about the purpose of the survey and its benefits before they participate. Participation in the research was not compulsory but on a voluntary basis and any person selected had the right to refuse or withdraw to participate. It was the responsibility of the researcher to provide clear information to the potential participants before undertaking the research, including information regarding withdrawal from the study (Cohen and Manion, 1997:357; Gall *et al.*, 1996:88; Neuman, 1997:443). Such information was not provided directly by the researcher to the participants but through the support of the Ministry of Women Affairs and Child Welfare which facilitated the dissemination of the questionnaires to the systematic sampled ECD centres in all the 13 educational regions in Namibia. It is important to note that the questionnaire had an information note indicating to the respondents the purpose for requesting their support in completing the questionnaire.

Equally, individuals, groups or institutions providing the information were also assured of confidentiality (Cohen and Manion, 1997:368) and that the results would be used only for the purpose of the research. No information would be linked to a specific individual or group of people. No names of individuals or centres would be made available to any person who might request them.

It is also very important for the research findings to be shared with the participants so that necessary interventions may be taken based on the findings. Research findings are likely to be made known through a publication of the study, once it has been agreed with the University of Stellenbosch or a national workshop on early childhood education in Namibia.

1.8 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

In recent years, educationists have discussed changing philosophies and paradigms in the field of education due to varied perceptions about learners' achievements and teachers' methods of teaching. Questions have also been raised about how learners with disabilities, or those perceived to have special learning needs, perform compared to those who are not classified as having such learning needs. Consequently, a number of varied definitions and concepts were adopted to describe the provision of education to learners who are perceived as experiencing barriers to learning. Such definitions also vary depending on the profession of the person, which makes it difficult to arrive at one global definition. In the case of special needs in education, concepts such as **mainstreaming**, **integration**, **normalisation**, **inclusive education** and **inclusion** are used (as discussed in 1.5); one has to hope for globally acceptable definitions if debate and developments are to be constructive. All these concepts are aimed at addressing the environment in which learners with special needs in education find themselves, in order to improve their learning outcomes.

1.8.1 Learners with Special Educational Needs

Learners with special educational needs are all those learners in an education setting who need additional support services, because they experience significant difficulties in learning compared with the majority of children of their age in the same educational settings. The exceptionally able child, who also has

special needs often not met in the normal classroom, may be included in the definitions but overlooked in the practice. Definitions of learners with special needs are as varied as the number of researchers on special needs in education. The researcher adopted the definition provided in Möwes (2002:17) that:

learners with special educational needs include those learners affected by war and environmental degradation and change, learners who are victims of abuse and violence, street children, children being brought up outside of their own families, children in abusive forms of child labour, learners with disabilities, girls in situations where their education is regarded to be less important than that of boys, learners affected by HIV [and] AIDS or other chronic illness, nomadic learners, learners from oppressed groups subjected to racism or other forms of discrimination,[...] learners whose home language is different from the language of instruction (Donald, 1993; Botha, 1994; UNESCO; 1994; Booth, 2000; Dyson, 2001).

The concept of special needs has been used to denote inadequacies within an individual rather than to challenge social shortfalls in a given system or educational context. Unfortunately, this can result in the reduction of support services to a medical discourse on disability with a resultant negative labelling of individuals or groups of people with special educational needs. A child may exhibit barriers to learning if he or she, for example, comes from a completely different language and cultural background relative to the majority of peers in a given classroom. Equally, another child may exhibit barriers to learning if he or she always comes to school on an empty stomach due to poverty at home, or if a child with disabilities does not get the necessary support services with regard to hearing aids, for example. Special educational needs should be observed within the reality of each child's situation, relative to the different socio-cultural contexts in which they live. However, the term 'learners with special educational needs' may denote some discriminatory connotations in education and which in many cases result in barriers to learning and development because of obstacles that

affect the intellectual, social and emotional development of such children (Engelbrecht, 1999; Muthukrishna, 2000; Naicker, 1999). For the purpose of this study, both the terms 'barriers to learning' and 'children with special needs' in education will be used to refer to those children experiencing challenges during their process of education and development due to their backgrounds.

1.8.2 Inclusive Approaches

Approach can be explained as a manner, methods or scheme constructed or adopted to tackle a particular issues, in this case inclusive early childhood education in Namibia. For example, the inclusive approach proposed in this research is to ensure wider participation from all stakeholders in a systemic and holistic education for all early childhood education children, irrespective of their diversities.

Inclusive approaches in education are those integrated approaches adopted over the years to address the special needs of particular groups of children in a given school or classroom in order to bring education to all children irrespective of their diversities. This approach is fully supported by UNESCO (2001) in arguing that inclusive approaches are more effective in that they allow learners to fully participate in their learning where each learner is supported according to his or her individual needs. An inclusive approach calls for the reconstruction of the education system to address the needs of children with special needs and thus combating exclusion through education. Inclusive approaches lay emphasis on good teaching and learning practices to overcome barriers and to broaden access to participation. An inclusive approach to early childhood education would call for the development of policies and guidelines that accommodate diversity in education and learning.

1.8.3 Early Childhood Development and Education

Early childhood development and education combines various elements ranging from stimulating a child's cognitive and psychosocial abilities to health and nutrition as well as parental and community involvement in the child's learning and development. Early childhood development is defined as *the process of change in which the child comes to master more and more complex levels of moving, thinking, feeling and interacting with people and objects in the environment* (Evans, Myers, and Ilfeld, 2000:3). Learning is considered central to a child's development and is defined as *the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, habits and values through experience, experimentation, observation, reflection, and/or study and instruction*.

Bredenkamp (1987); Eloff (2001); Evans, *et al.* (2000); McCormick and Hickson (1996:55); Meadows, (1986), in clarifying the importance of education, confirm that the most notable changes that occur during the process of human development happen between conception and the first years of formal learning. Safety of the child, nutrition and health, education and social development are considered critical in the process of a child's development.

The Education White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Education of South Africa (Department of Education, South Africa, 2001:14) defines early childhood development as:

....a comprehensive approach to policies and programmes for children from birth to nine years of age with the active participation of their parents and caregivers. Its purpose is to protect the child's rights to develop his or her full cognitive, emotional, social and physical potential.

When considering the definitions of early childhood development cited above, it is certain that interest is placed on the child's interaction with the self and the surrounding environment, as well as on the cognitive and psychosocial support

the child should receive. For the purpose of this study, early childhood development refers to the period of a child's life from 0 to 6 years of age. The study will focus on all age groups from 0 – 6 years with more focus placed on the age group 4 to 6 years of age. This age group has been selected as the group to benefit specifically from pre-primary education programmes in Namibia before the formal years of school.

1.9 STRUCTURE OF PRESENTATION

The research study is presented in the following way:

Chapter One provides the background to the study including the objectives of the study. This chapter also describes the research method and design including the data analysis procedures, and provides definitions of some terms.

Chapter Two provides a literature review of early childhood education, drawing examples from international perspectives, while **Chapter Three** provides a literature review on inclusive early childhood education. This separation of focus helped the researcher to make a clear distinction between the two vital aspects of the central topic, as well as providing the researcher with information as a foundation for developing fresh guidelines for Namibia.

Chapter Four contains the research design and methodology and provides an analysis of the results obtained in the study. **Chapter Five** provides a discussion of the findings, while **Chapter Six** discusses the implications for developing guidelines for inclusive early childhood education in Namibia.

Chapter Seven proposes guidelines for an inclusive education approach in early childhood education in Namibia. **Chapter Eight** contains a detailed summary of the earlier chapters along with conclusions and recommendations based on the research.

CHAPTER 2

PERSPECTIVES ON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the importance of early childhood education and its implications for lifelong learning. It presents differences and similarities in the provision of early childhood education in selected developed and developing countries.

Research has indicated that children who have gone through early childhood education and development programmes perform better during their primary education and later in life (Evans, *et al.*, 2000; Hildebrand, 1997; Fisher, 1996;imba, Mostert, Hengari, Haihambo-Mwetudhana, Möwes, Mwoombola, 2000; Meade and Podmore, 2002; Meadows, 1986; McEvilly, and Tiley, 1990; Petersen, 1987; Pugh, 1996). However, a number of countries are still faced with the challenge of making access to education for young children a reality. Different reasons are normally cited, such as lack of proper legislation on ECD, lack of coordination between government and ECD providers, poor support services extended to ECD and lack of proper qualified teachers in ECD. What some governments fail to understand is that a low level of school readiness may result in an increased likelihood of poor levels of academic achievement and high repetition rates, failure and ultimate school drop out, which may in turn result in an increased number of street children, social dependency, unemployment and an increase in poverty. The chapter aims to outline the potential value of ECD as well as the challenges encountered during the implementation of the National ECD Policy for Namibia.

In addition to lack of support services and poor teacher education in ECD, the provisions of early childhood education also vary according to the nature of the centre providing such services. Although these provisions vary in quality, quantity and the nature of services offered, however, they are all geared towards the provision of an initial learning experience for the child before his or her formal education. Some ECD Programmes are community or civil society driven while others are individually funded via a single benefactor (either a financially strong patron, or a special financial trust), or through government and development partners. Some centres may operate as profit-making institutions while others are non-profit making. This chapter presents examples of various ECD programmes provided in selected developed and developing countries. These countries were selected because of their strong practices in ECD provisions from which Namibia can learn. These strengths are not only in the formulation of policy, but also in their implementation of ECD, which necessarily includes a teacher-education programme.

2.2 OVERVIEW OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

2.2.1 Introduction

Rapid socio-economic and political changes have made the young child the centre of attention and early childhood education is now moving to the forefront of education reform and national policy agenda. For example, the recommendation of the Dakar Framework for Action (2000) identified early childhood education and care as the first objective to be achieved by 2015 by all the UNESCO Member States. The Dakar Framework for Action marks a significant milestone in the history of early childhood education in a number of countries. It presents governments with both an opportunity and a challenge to reconsider their early childhood education policies and strategies, within the broader national development plans. It also calls upon governments to ensure budgetary provisions for that sector of education so that children can be prepared

for their early childhood education while ensuring social cohesion. Implications for focusing on the provisions of quality early childhood education are viewed as reducing barriers to education and development in the child's process of education as well as contributing towards economic upliftment and development (Evans, *et al.*, 2000; Gallagher, Rooney and Campbell, 1999; Myers, 1990).

2.2.2 Early Childhood Development

The development of early childhood education in a number of countries has been influenced by various theories of child and learning development. Attitudes to education have understandably developed in parallel with current insights into the development of children. Piaget's and Vygotsky's approaches to cognitive development sees young children as constantly confronted with information from their environment and continuously involved in an attempt to organise, understand and adapt to new information. Piaget suggests that this happens through four continuously interacting processes namely, **assimilation**, **accommodation**, **equilibration** and **adaptation** (Baron, Byrne and Kantowitz, 1981; Piaget and Inhelder, 1969).

2.2.2.1 Cognitive Development

Cognitive development refers to the period when the child is developing intellectually during early childhood and includes the development of skills such as language, speech, pre-reading skills. While all aspects of child development are equally important and cannot be compartmentalised into cognitive, social emotional or physical development because they are interlinked, it is equally important to ensure that early childhood education contributes to the development of all these aspects in a child. As discussed in 2.2.2, Piaget and Vygotsky, refer to a combination of processes and factors that influence cognitive development (Eloff, 2001; Anastasiow and Nucci, 1994; Hurst and Joseph,

1998). While some factors influencing child development may be intrinsic, others may be extrinsic. For example, some hereditary factors or a severe disability, inherited or environmentally acquired, may have an influence on the child's growth and inadequate nutrition may result in a barrier to having his or her cognitive potential fulfilled (Green and Gredler, 2002 Evans, Myers and Ilfeld, 2000). Such challenges may be addressed through early appropriate interventions during early childhood education. The theories of both Piaget and Vygotsky recognise the contribution of early childhood education to the development of complex cognitive skills when a child is involved in various interactions with his or her socio-cultural environment.

Piaget's theory of child development has influenced many educationists in both developed and developing countries, in particular in the early years of learning. Piaget has identified four stages of child development, arguing that there is a progression of complex and abstract cognitive abilities during early childhood development (Green, 2001, Meadows, 1996). The first stage of a child's development according to Piaget's theory of child development is called the *Sensorimotor* stage from birth to about 18 to 24 months. During this stage, the child still learns through motor activities and sensory impressions. The second stage of development is called the *pre-operational* stage and starts from about 18 months until the child is about seven years old (Baron *et al.*, 1981; Eloff, 2001; Helms and Turner, 1976; Lascarides and Hinitz, 2000; Meadows, 1986; Piaget and Inhelder, 1969). The child at the pre-operational stage is thought to have developed thinking and language skills, which are more advanced than at the sensorimotor stage. Piaget viewed these children as self-centred and very egocentric in the sense that they look at the world from only their own perspective (Eloff, 2001; Meadows, 1986, Seefeldt and Barbour, 1986). Equally, the child at this stage focuses on a single aspect of a problem at a time and does not consider problems in a broader and holistic way thus failing to understand the relationship between problems (Eloff, 2001).

The third stage of development is called the stage of *concrete operations*, which

covers the period from 7 years to about 11 or 12 years. This concrete operational stage is referred to as the beginning of cognitive development because children at this stage engage in logical thinking and can relate to past events and thus can have a better understanding about future ideas. Green (2001) states that the child at the concrete operational stage does not necessarily need concrete tools in order to be able to think. At this stage the child is viewed as having the ability to operate mentally in a systematic way on internal schemas that represent concrete experiences.

The last stage of development is called the stage of *formal operations* whereby children at about age 12 enter the final stage of cognitive development. Children at this stage start using deductive thinking and apply advanced logical abstract thinking skills. Although some educators may have perceived the four stages of child development as fixed, they are not fixed but are interrelated and children progress differently from stage to stage on an individual basis. The environment may also influence such progression and learning conditions in which a child may find him or herself. Piaget's theory of child development highlights awareness of the value of the ECD curriculum that should focus on the development processes within an individual child to cater for the needs of the child, including the child with special needs, and see what the child brings to the learning environment.

On the other hand, although these stages have much to commend them, Piaget's stress on the different stages of development may have resulted in some underestimation of the ability of young children. Some of Piaget's tasks are regarded as complex for some children for reasons unconnected to the child's understanding of the underlying concepts. Equally, some tasks were too abstract and did not make sense to some children. Piaget was also criticised for having underestimated the capacities of children to learn languages or social interactions with adults and other children (Meadows, 1986).

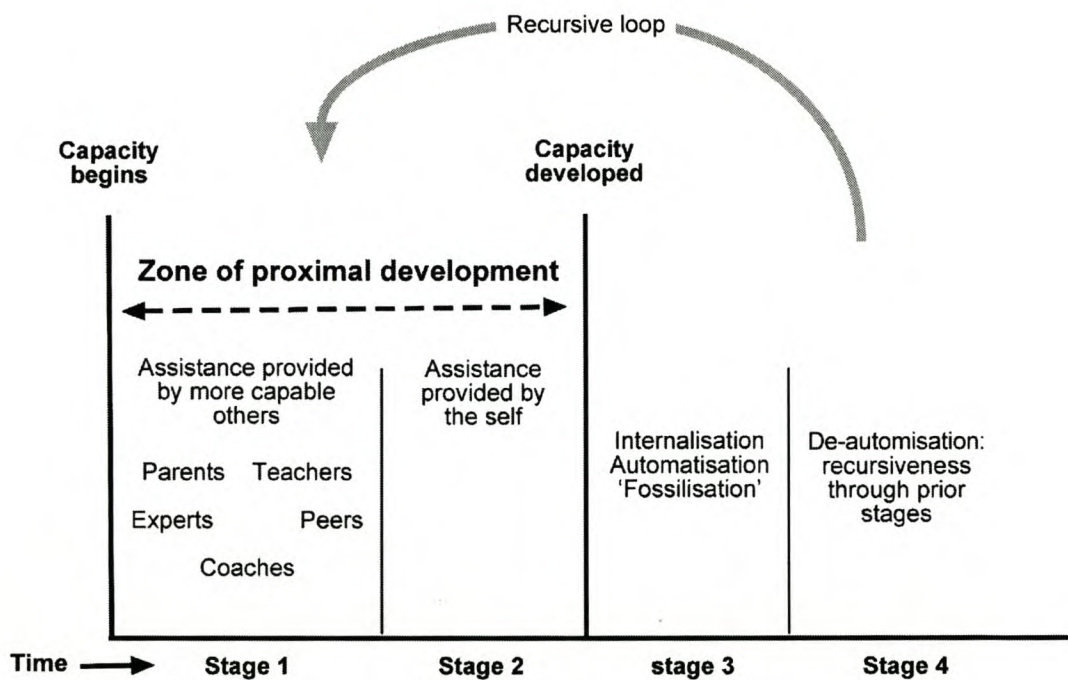
While Piaget believed in nature and the individual's construction of reality, Vygostky, on the other hand, believed that social interactions and cultural

contexts influenced child development in a holistic manner. According to Vygotsky, cognitive development relates to the culture and contexts in which the child grows up. At the centre of his theory is the notion that development takes place through social relationships (Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana, 2002; Eloff, 2001; Green 2001). Vygotsky had three most important dimensions of his theory of cognitive development, namely the role of the social context, language and mediation (Donald *et al.*, 2002). Vygotsky's theory was based on the notion that child development was influenced by social relationships where from a very early age young children learn to construct meaning from their interactions with their parents, siblings as well as peers and other adults in their surroundings. He believed that children derived meaning from what is passed on to them through dynamic socio-cultural interactions. Vygotsky also asserted that it is through language that people communicate and share information as well as develop their cultural values and considered language as a powerful means of cognitive development. In relating to the process of mediation, Vygotsky coined the concept of the **zone of proximal development** (ZPD) (Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana, 2002; Edwards and Knight, 1994; Hurst and Joseph, 1998) in which a child is assisted to construct new meaning through proximal interactions. He referred to the *actual* level of development as the level that lies just beyond the child's present level of understanding and the *proximal* level of development as the level where the child cannot quite understand something by himself or herself but has the potential to understand through proximal interactions with another person (Donald, *et al.*, 2002). The actual level refers to the child's mental functions already established at a specific level while the proximal level defines those functions that have not yet developed but are in a process of developing (Ackermann, 2001). Vygotsky used the word *mediator* to refer to another child, a teacher, parent or any other adult assisting the child to move from his or her present position in order to construct new meaning.

The significance of Vygotsky's zone of proximal development is that it determines the lower and upper boundaries of the zone within which teaching should be orientated. Teaching becomes more useful when it moves ahead of the child's

development leading the child to carry out activities that force him or her to rise above himself or herself. Tharp and Gallimore, (1988:35) in Figure 2.1 below provides a clear example of how the zone of proximal development influences cognitive development through social interactions between the teacher, the child, the parents and the peers.

FIGURE 2.1 ZONE OF PROXIMAL DEVELOPMENT



[Adapted from Tharp and Gallimore, 1988]

The ZPD indicated that a child can learn at a higher level than initially perceived and move through the zone of proximal development when supported by an adult or another peer. In order to keep the child's level of interest high, the child should be engaged in the space of potential development. Providing the child with already known information may result in the child losing interest in the activity, at the same time, providing the child with activities far beyond his or her

understanding may equally result in the child's unwillingness to attempt undertaking the activity (Donald, *et al.*, 2002). Vygotsky believed that it was a mistake for a teacher to provide all learning to the child and stressed the central supportive role of the teacher and peers in the process of learning in which the teacher is also seen as learning together with the child. Vygotsky carefully examined the role of the teacher as a *scaffolder* and *mediator* in supporting child learning and development when going through the ZPD (Ackermann, 2001; Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana, 2002; Edwards and Knight, 1994; McCollum and Bair, 1994). By scaffolding, the teacher is expected to solicit and maintain the child's interest; provide tasks that are at the level of the child and increase the complexity of the tasks as the child progresses.

Landry (2002) has identified a number of important elements to be considered by early childhood educators in promoting cognitive development in children:

- Providing rich language environment as well as reading to children.
- Responding to children's requests and signals promptly and sensitively.
- Maintaining and expanding children's interest in specific learning activities.
- Avoiding negative and highly restrictive behaviours.
- Providing more opportunities for choice.
- Monitoring children's behaviour.

Eloff (2001), however, identified the following important elements to facilitate cognitive and language development:

- Reflection on appropriate curriculum goals.
- Selection of appropriate objectives for curriculum and appropriate teaching approaches.
- Teacher flexibility to adjust teaching accordingly.
- Provision of continuous opportunities so children can practice their newly acquired skills.
- Provision of feedback that relates to performance and monitoring progress.

There is certainly a higher probability in early childhood education settings that a child will successfully learn his or her linguistic skills. Considering Piaget's theory of child development, that children construct their own understanding of new concepts, it is important that both parents and teachers challenge the development of the child by providing him or her with a wider variety of learning experiences. Eloff (2001) refers to the important role of play in enhancing cognitive development through improving their ability to solve problems in different contexts. In cases where children are experiencing barriers to learning, efforts should be made to provide them with early intervention mechanisms so that they develop their intellectual abilities. It is therefore important to provide children with a rich linguistic, cognitive, and social environment.

The important role of mother tongue instruction at this stage of child development should also not be neglected. The use of the child's home language facilitates the process of the child internalising new concepts in his or her own language before using a second language. It equally contributes to promoting cultural identity within the child. Vygotsky's zone of proximal development is also very important in promoting language and communication through facilitating interaction between children and adults and between children with learning difficulties at the prerogative of the children themselves. It should also be noted that the process of learning for children with special needs in education would not be different from others without the so-called special needs. What is important for the teachers is to put an emphasis on the holistic approach to learning and development where the needs of the individual child are considered within his or her zone for proximal development, and where more support is extended to the child with special needs in education.

2.2.2.2 Social and Emotional Development

Research has suggested that children are actively engaged in constructing their own understanding from their experiences, which are closely associated with

their socio-cultural contexts. Children learn better by observing and participating with their peers and adults in the process of learning. It is through the learning processes that they form their own hypotheses and test them out through social interaction, by observing what has happened and reflecting on their own findings as well as asking questions and formulating their own answers (Gilley and Gilley, 1980; Lascarides and Hinitz, 2000; Linder, 1994; Seefeldt and Barbour, 1994).

In order to enhance social development in children, early childhood education should therefore provide a number of opportunities for children to develop on a social level. At the ECD Centre, children meet a large group of people outside their home for the first time. They meet children of the same age with whom they spend many hours together, especially through socialising with other peers through play and group activity. At this early stage the child must learn to socialise; he or she must learn to share with others and also learn to take turns in a number of activities organised or unorganised. It was pointed out earlier that human behaviour is better understood within an ecological model for understanding development. In this case, child development is best understood within a socio-cultural context of the family, school, peers and the wider community Bronfenbrenner (1979; 1993). The different contexts in which a child develops are interrelated and have an impact on one another. For example, a child who lives in extreme poverty will be affected by the broader society, such as stereotyping, and may exhibit the effects of such stereotyping. Early childhood educators should be aware of the influence and impact of socio-cultural contexts of child development and learning and provide support for children to express themselves.

While developing a child's intellectual skills, the school must also recognise that it is equally important to teach children to value themselves, be proud of and respect their identities and cultural backgrounds. In addition, they must also be taught to appreciate diversity and to appreciate that they make up the wider community consisting of different cultures and sub-cultures (Siraj-Blatchford 1996; Myers, 1990; Evans, Myers and Ilfeld 2000; Seefeld and Barbour, 1994).

In a country like Namibia or South Africa where people lived separately according to race, language and colour, early childhood education should be considered as a starting point in which children are taught to socialise with one another irrespective of differences. It is at such places where children can also be taught to respect others' diversity while valuing themselves as well as be taught how to *live together*. The child, therefore, must find the ECD Centre a most congenial place to be where he or she can socialise with the ECD educator as well as with other peers who are not necessarily his or her siblings. Efforts should also be made to protect the child from negative societal influences and to help the child to become a responsible adult citizen within the context of lifelong learning.

Friendly (2004) identifies four goals, which can help to ensure that social inclusion becomes a major contribution to early childhood education:

- Early childhood education is intended to support and enhance children's well-being, development and prospects for life long learning.
- An ECD programme is not only to provide a stronger start in life for all young people, but also it is intended to support parents while their children are in this early stage of education. The ECD programme should thus allow the young person to develop socially and personally to the point where the child feels relaxed and comfortable with a pursuit for higher opportunities.
- ECD is intended to advance social solidarity and social cohesion by helping the school (teachers, learners and support staff) to function as a community within which there can be interpersonal co-operation across class and cultural boundaries.
- Early childhood services are intended to contribute to equity in a number of ways, but are especially connected to equity goals for women and children. The rights of children with disabilities and their parents are an important equity and social justice issue.

2.2.3 The Early Childhood Development Curriculum

2.2.3.1 Introduction

In most cases where the definitions of curriculum have been attempted, emphasis has mainly been placed on the content of the teaching programme. Recently, however, attention has shifted to a holistic and integrated learning and teaching approach. In other words, the process of education is considered in a wider social context. Earlier curriculum was viewed as the instructional content and outcomes of that content. The definition provided by the Department of Education of South Africa (1997) reflects the change. It defines curriculum as 'everything that influences learning, from the educators and the learning programmes to the learning environment'. Curriculum is a conceptual framework and organisational structure for decision-making about educational priorities, administrative policies and evaluation criteria and constitutes what is going on in the classroom between the teacher and the learners, and views the interest of the child at the centre of teaching and learning (Kessler and Swadener; 1992; Miller, 1995). In general, a curriculum provides well-defined frameworks to guide the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of educational programmes.

Curriculum is an organised framework that delineates the content children are to learn, the processes through which children achieve the identified curricular goals, what teachers do to help children achieve these goals, and the context in which teaching and learning occur (Bredenkamp, Knuth, Kunesh and Shulman, 1992).

Proponents of early childhood education believe that a developmentally appropriate curriculum should provide a basis for the knowledge of theory and research about how children develop and learn, with a particular focus on the needs and interests of the individual child in relation to programme goals (Bredenkamp, Knuth, Kunesh and Shulman, 1992).

A developmentally appropriate curriculum does not only refer to the content and teaching methodology, but also looks at those learning outcomes which are intended or unintended. According to Kessler and Swadener (ibid), when developing curriculum, it is critical to consider what is developmentally appropriate for the child as a learner against what is developmentally inappropriate in early childhood education. A developmentally appropriate curriculum should change according to the needs of the individual child in the classroom while focusing on integrating learning rather than departmentalising learning (Miller, 1995:5). This type of curriculum is regarded as an enrichment curriculum because it considers all aspects of a child's development (physical, emotional, language, social and social development (Bredenkamp, 1987; Lerner, 1993) and offers the child various opportunities and challenges during the stages of development. This curriculum is based on Vygotsky's theory of development which stresses the importance of educating the child in the light of his or her zone of proximal development taking into consideration the knowledge and interest that have resulted from the child's experiences with the home and the community.

The Guidelines provided by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 1988), are most relevant in this case that: curriculum development should take into account many sources of curriculum:

- Child development knowledge.
- Individual characteristics of children.
- Knowledge base of various disciplines.
- Values of our culture
- Parents' desires (Bredenkamp, Knuth, Kunesch and Shulman, 1992).

An effective inclusive education approach depends on the nature of the curriculum currently in place. The Department of Education of South Africa (1997) has identified one of the most serious barriers to learning as inflexible curricula that may not be accessible to learners and may fail to meet the diverse needs of all learners in the classroom. If the curriculum is to become successful

in meeting the diverse needs of all learners in an inclusive setting, it should be flexible, and should promote an intensive and goal-oriented individualised teaching (Bredenkamp, *et al.*, 1992; Muthukrishna, 2000; Wilson, 1998; Winzer, 1998), where emphasis is placed on individual learners, while learners with special educational needs receive additional support services.

Some principles that are also relevant for early childhood education have been suggested for consideration on how to modify an inclusive curriculum to meet the needs of all learners in a classroom:

- The learners, parents, teacher, educational administrators and the community must raise school expectations.
- Learners need a systematically integrated curriculum, not a fragmented one with greater emphasis on coherence and more interrelationships and connections between subjects and disciplines.
- Curriculum decisions should not only focus on what to cover, but also on how learning materials foster the ability of the learner to use and apply the knowledge efficiently.
- Learning must be conceptualised to create meaning in the learner.
- Learners should be directed towards achieving the same goals.
- Evaluation of learning should consider concrete learning experiences.
- Teachers should facilitate learning while learners take on the role of active participants and thinkers.
- New Information Communication Technologies (ICT) should be integrated into the inclusive curriculum (Kochhar, West and Taymans; 2000).

2.2.3.2 Factors Influencing the Implementation of an Inclusive ECD Curriculum

Various factors may influence the successful implementation of an inclusive curriculum. These include teacher qualifications and experiences in working in

inclusive early childhood settings, a varying degree of teacher professionalism, attitudes of teachers, parents, and support to children with special education needs. It was explained in Section 2.2.3 above that the quality of early childhood educators and their understanding of early childhood inclusive education as well as their attitudes towards children experiencing barriers to learning will determine the quality of the outcomes of a developmentally appropriate curriculum. Teachers in inclusive settings must have a certain level of qualifications allowing them to teach in early childhood education settings, and the necessary skills to be able to adapt their teaching approaches to reflect the inclusive curriculum in place. Teachers are expected to be creative and not static in implementing an inclusive education curriculum (Miller, 1996). They should be in control of what is happening in the classroom in meeting the individual needs and interests of children.

Inadequately trained teachers may hinder a successful implementation of the curriculum. In order to improve the quality of early childhood education and to promote an inclusive approach to ECD, teachers, therefore, should also be well prepared in order to be able to implement an inclusive curriculum and to cope with the needs and demands of the individual child in the classroom.

The culture and community in which the child lives may equally influence the curriculum both positively and negatively. The community should thus be taken into consideration in developing an inclusive curriculum.

2.2.3.3 The Physical Environment and the Curriculum

One aspect an inclusive curriculum should consider is the physical structure of the classroom in which learning takes place. In most cases, teachers and learners suffer the consequences of bad architecture which they have no possibility of changing. The shape, size and position of a classroom may also pose a challenge to the activities of an inclusive classroom setting (Arthur,

Bochner and Butterfield, 1999; Hanline, 1999; Kochhar, West and Taymans, 2000; Malone, 1999; Miller, 1996). Will children of three learn effectively if they are one of 60 in a classroom taught by one teacher? Does the teacher receive extra support, especially to work with children who need special educational needs? Is the classroom well ventilated with enough light? The immediate environment of the learner will undoubtedly be a crucial factor in determining the extent to which the child learns.

2.2.3.4 The Role of Teachers

Eloff (2001:62) poses a very pertinent question when she asks 'what can a preschool educator or caregiver do to promote the physical development of *all* learners in the learning environment? Answers to this question are as varied as the challenges faced by a teacher in an early childhood education setting, more particularly in an inclusive setting. However, research has revealed that the way teachers interact with children in the classroom will be informed by their understanding of the developmental stages in all aspects of learning (Hurst and Joseph, 1994; Bredenkamp, 1987). Vygotsky's theories of child development have some implications for the early childhood education teacher. He points out that learning awakens a variety of internal development processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers (1978:70).

In an early childhood inclusive setting, the teacher should be a mediator of learning and provide children with the necessary stimulating learning environment with proper guidance, matching activities to their cognitive and motivational level. In relation to the assessment of children with special needs in education, Vygotsky argues for greater emphasis on the importance of activities that are not only meaningful and relevant to children's needs but are also at the level that will keep them interested so they can grow to a new level of understanding. The role of the teacher should be that of a mediator in which the

teacher provides support so the child can acquire the necessary specific skills he or she has not yet been successful in mastering. Necessary feedback should be provided for the child to adjust his or her performance, including models of successful completion of specific activities undertaken. Praise and correction should be offered when necessary. It is equally important to provide constructive criticism where possible. Ackermann (2001) adds another important aspect that should be considered by the teacher, namely that of *dynamic assessment* in which the teacher is expected to provide the child with hints and prompts at the different levels as the task becomes complex. Since the zone of proximal development does not depend on the individual child alone but more on the active engagement of the child in the development of his language and scientific concepts, (Green, 2001) the support of parents, teachers and other peers is necessary to assist the child with special needs in education. It involves the continuous construction of each child's zone of proximal development and how best to facilitate learning to develop the child's language and scientific concepts to facilitate the development of the child's cognitive abilities (Green, 2001).

The changes that are expected of a teacher in an inclusive ECD setting have led to the complexity of the responsibility that is placed on the teacher and on the need for effective teaching. Learning in the zone of proximal development involves all aspect of the child and does not only change the possibilities for active participation but also transforms the child's identity. The child's identity is transformed because he or she as an individual and the social world in which he lives are mutually constitutive of each other – transformation of the child involves transformation of the community of which he or she is a member and of the joint activities in which he is engaged in the classroom.

In any inclusive early childhood education setting, it is important to note that children make sense of the world by forming concepts to describe their experiences: the teaching of language and science is about creating harmony within the child. The role of the teacher is to provide guidance and facilitate learning by adopting problem solving and investigational approaches to stimulate

the child's intellectual ability to solve problems and taking risks. As the mediator, the teacher should provide more opportunities for self-expression to allow the children to apply their newly acquired skills. Such opportunities can be provided by creating a space for '*soft play*' (Eloff, 2001), through peer interactions, games, scientific activities and simulations as well as interactions with adults in order to stimulate learning. Opportunities should be provided for such activities to take place both inside as well as outside the classroom environment.

2.2.3.5 Parental Support in Implementing the Curriculum

The important role of parents in education is stressed in the National Early Childhood Development Policy of 1996 as well as the Education Act Number 16 of 2001. The South African School Act (1996), the National Plan of Action for Children (1996) and the White Paper 6 of 2001 of South Africa recognise the pertinent role of parents in contributing to education and development in that country (Swart, Engelbrecht, Eloff, Pettipher and Oswald, 2004).

Parents can provide valuable information to schools about the needs of their children, in particular those experiencing barriers to learning and development, that the teachers do not have. This could help inform curriculum and teaching approaches. Parents and communities, including learners with special educational needs should be involved in the development, monitoring and evaluation of curriculum. Involving them in the process of developing and implementing curriculum helps to strengthen the link between what is taught at school and what home can contribute towards learning. Parents are usually curious and interested to learn about their children's activities at school and willing to assist schools in developing their programmes (school outings, extramural activities, remedial education). An inclusive ECD curriculum, therefore, should ensure that parents and communities are fully involved in the conceptualisation, monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum in order to ensure successful inclusion (Kochhar, West and Taymans, 2000; Scruggs and

Mastropieri, 1994), as well as to assess the impact of the curriculum on children. Parents are likely to be interested in knowing how their children are benefiting from ECD or in what adaptations need to be made in order to meet the needs of all children in the classroom. A curriculum should enable individual learners to make sense of what they are learning, link such learning to their home experiences and utilise their newly acquired skills better in society.

2.2.4 The Importance of Play in Early Childhood Education

A number of theories of early childhood education have placed emphasis on play as an important aspect of early childhood development. Play has been defined as a valuable strategy to be used in ECD because it stimulates intellectual growth and creative thinking and at the same time, it contributes to social interaction and to the child's development of communication skills. Vygotsky believes that play contributes to language development through symbolic play that promotes the development of symbolic representation abilities in a child, as well as enhancing social interactions (Arthur, Bochner and Butterfield, 1999; Hanline 1999; Hazareesingh, Simms and Anderson, 1989; Linder, 1994).

Children's play can be divided into different types; construction play, symbolic play and sensorimotor play (Gilley and Gilley, 1980; Wolfgang and Wolfgang, 1992). Curtis, (1996), distinguishes between *epistemic* or *exploratory play* and *ludic* play. These two (exploratory and ludic) are not equally purposeful: the intermediate educational outcomes are not similar. During exploratory play, the child discovers new challenges, and the implicit meaning within these challenges can lead to positive learning. There is a form of self tutelage during the early encounter; not only will this be fun which is natural to playing, but also there can be recognition of learning during the playful pursuit. There can thus be a double reward. By contrast, *ludic* play is mainly play for the sake of the child having fun; there is no fundamental *meaning* in the playing.

Research on the importance of play in early childhood education indicates that it is a vehicle for learning curriculum content, especially in the case of 3 to 6 year-olds and children with disabilities (Hanline, 1999; Malone and Langone; Linder, 1994; Wolfgang and Wolfgang, 1992).

2.2.4.1 Play and Language Development

Language and communication are central to social interactions. Through play, children can develop their language and literacy skills – the children use their cognitive skills in order to understand and cope in a social context while using language to define a situation using acceptable forms of language (Linder, 1994). Play provides an opportunity for children to internalise language concepts and to become aware of linguistic rules and increase their language skills (Iacono, 1999; Linder, 1994; Winer, 1996). Furthermore, while playing with different objects, children also enhance their convergent and divergent problem solving skills. For example, they can express and represent their ideas, thoughts and emotions and resolve conflict when engaged in symbolic play (Hanline, 1999; Piaget and Inhelder, 1969; Arthur, Bochner and Butterfield, 1999).

Research on the impact of play on child development confirms that play becomes particularly beneficial to children with language delays who (Iacono, 1999; Linder, 1994; Wilson, 1998), can develop their linguistic skills through play. Prompts or cues from peers or adults are particularly effective in assisting children with special educational needs in developing both their language and social skills and developing positive relationships between these children and their peers or adults. In order to avoid any serious language and speech impairments in children, it therefore becomes crucial to identify such impairments as early as possible during the early years of childhood in order to provide children with appropriate interventions (Bredenkamp, 1987; Wilson, 1994, Wilson, 1998). Here are some of the recommendations for enhancing literacy through play made by Winer (1996:402-3):

- Literacy should occur within a social context, as an extension of the child's relationship with other people and should be encouraged during play.
- Print and book experiences should be regarded as natural and as important as any other area in the early childhood centre.
- Teachers should occasionally join children in their play and take advantage of such opportunities to extend language, reinforce concepts and demonstrate knowledge of print conventions.
- Lists and charts are valuable ways of making print meaningful, and allowing all children to see adults write. These opportunities should occur formally during group times as well as informally with small groups or individually during dramatic play episodes.

It is fortunate and supportive to the general ECD case, that researchers view playing as an important contributory factor to the child's intellectual and cognitive development. Perhaps, the greatest practical challenge is to find ways through which contributory factors can be converted into integral components. Curtis, 1996; Gilley and Gilley, 1980; Selleck and Griffin, 1996, and Weikart, 2000, provide a framework for teachers to change their roles from provider of knowledge to that of guide in order to facilitate the child's learning through play. This is no mean challenge. The exploratory play quoted above could be meaningless to some children. A trained teacher must be able to recognise this occurrence and guide the child with special needs towards greater learning from an activity that is, superficially, just fun. The selection of teachers who can display this sensitivity to the needs of children will require considerable determination in training them (Curtis, 1996; Malome, 1999).

2.2.4.2 Play and the Physical Environment

The physical environment, inside the classroom as well as outside, in which play takes place should be considered as an important aspect of the early childhood curriculum and should take into account the developmental stages of children. A

child-centred approach in early childhood education must reflect the importance of careful use of play as a critical aspect of development. Should play be organised within the classroom contexts, teachers should ensure that the classroom is adequately lit with sufficient ventilation. Equally, the sitting space and arrangements should be based on the child's developmental stage as well as his or her ability, ensuring that the needs of children with disabilities are considered and taking care not to overcrowd the play environment.

The classroom should also have space for children to play with various objects that are relevant to their daily life experience outside the classroom situation (Bredenkamp, 1987; Hanline, 1999; Mallory and New, 1994; Malone and Langone, 1999; Wilson, 1998). Although in a study undertaken by Malone and Stoneman (1990) and Malone, Stoneman and Langone (1994) it was found that children engaged in more complicated play at home than at school, it is very important to reflect the home situation in the classroom. Real life experiences must be provided in the classroom or outside. For example, the classroom can have a corner where children could play mummy or daddy in a doll's house, do puzzles, build with bricks, and play doctor or nurse or drive a car. In considering the impact of social interactions on cognitive development, one should also take into account not only the availability of these educational materials, their characteristics and their significance in child development, but also the types of the toys provided to children, (Malone, 1999; Malone and Langone, 1994), especially those with disabilities (Arthur, Bochner and Butterfield, 1999). Dangerous toys should by all means be avoided. The same applies to the environment in which play takes place. An environment in which the child plays can specifically provide a child with disabilities with the necessary opportunities to take risks and experience failure within a supportive context which he or she may not necessarily experience elsewhere (Rodger and Ziviani, 1999). Environmental or architectural barriers have been identified as those where the physical structures make it difficult for children with physical disabilities to access to *school buildings and grounds, classrooms, lunch areas, bathrooms, multi-floor assignments, laboratory areas, school transportation vehicles, pay phones,*

desks and tables and drinking fountains (Feldman, Gordon and Snyman, 2001). The ECD centre should ensure full accessibility not only to children with physical disabilities but also to their parents and community members who may have physical disabilities.

New Information Communication Technologies (ICT) has become important elements of early childhood education in some countries. In order to provide children with opportunities to experience the joy of playing with these new technologies, computers should therefore be provided for children to learn to play games and do other educational projects (Malone and Langone, 1999; Linder, 1994; Rodger and Ziviani, 1999).

2.2.4.3 Adult Intervention in Promoting Play

In order to use play as an instruction strategy within an ECD curriculum, adults should respond to the child's needs and demands and provide the proper, carefully planned learning environment in which the child can develop (Malone, 1999; Selleck and Griffin, 1996; Weikart, 2000; Wilson, 1998). Through carefully organised play, younger children will begin to understand the environment around them – nature, one's relations with others - and try to make sense of it. As the child uses these play activities, the interaction between the child and the adult (Linder, 1998; Iacono, 1999; Wilson, 1998), be it the early childhood educator or another adult outside the school environment, becomes a crucial form of guidance in the child's development and should be encouraged at all stages.

It is only a short step away from this *play with meaning*, through which a child becomes involved in a form of self-tutelage, to achieving the reciprocal teaching advocated by Vygotsky. In this teaching, learners are placed in groups to solve their own problems through question and answer in order to develop their thinking skills (Helms and Turner, 1976; Green and Gredler, 2002; Wilson, 1998).

Having learners with disabilities in the same classroom settings with those without disabilities enhances language development, level of confidence and social skills of those with special needs (Arthur, Bochner and Butterfield, 1999; Iacono, 1999; Linder, 1994). Thinking skills assist in advancing the child's abstract thinking capacity. However, to assist the child in advancing abstract thinking skills, more attention, and daily interactions from parents and teachers should be encouraged in order to maintain the child's eagerness to learn and discover new things. Both parents and teachers can teach by asking questions whereas the direct challenge from a child may be for them to offer an answer. The teacher's knowledge and theoretical experience about early childhood education will also influence his or her attitudes about play. A teacher who has a thorough knowledge of developmental psychology would certainly place more emphasis on the importance of early childhood play and would be in a better position to negotiate learning tasks with children compared to one who does not have any knowledge and experience (Malone, 1999).

Similarly, interactions amongst children are an important learning experience, which should be promoted through socialising in groups amongst each other and with the teacher. According to Malaguzzi (1993:11):

Children's self learning, supported by interactive experiences constructed with the help of adults, determine the selection and organization of processes and strategies that are part of and coherent with the overall goals of early childhood education.

The quality of support extended to children both at home and at school has a strong impact on the development of the child. Research reveals that young mothers and those with fewer educational opportunities may provide their children with fewer opportunities to play, may be less likely to adjust their behaviours to those of their children during play, and may not regard play as an important aspect of development (Malone, 1999). In addition, early childhood education centres that are of poor quality are regarded as having a challenge with regard to building the social skills of the child compared to those that are of

high quality. Similarly, some studies have found that parents of children with physical disabilities had 'inappropriate' play expectations of their children and focused more on motor development rather than on the actual social and intellectual development of the child (Rodger and Ziviani, 1999). It is therefore very important to offer families education so that parents are sensitised to the value of early childhood education, including the value of play and socialisation between children and parents and to enhance positive learning experiences.

2.2.4.4 Respect for Diversity through Play

The sense of identity of any individual is important as a precondition for subsequent development of friendship and other intimate (Ackermann, 2001) or social relationships as well as relating to a culture. The right of the child to be free from discrimination has been emphasised by Curtis, 1992; Hazareesingh, *et al.*, 1989; Schickedanz, York, Steward and White, 1990), who contend that racial awareness in children may start as early as the age of three, and they may start expressing racial tendencies at the age of five. Such attitudes may encourage barriers to understanding and accepting cultural, ethnic and racial differences. Siraj-Blatchford, (1996), cites examples of how racial messages were in the media in Britain and also reveals their devastating implications in early childhood education. Racial, social and cultural inequalities still exist within the setting of early childhood education and have to be addressed at a policy-making level, including the implementation of any curriculum which may seek to reduce these inequalities.

In a country like Namibia, especially in centres where children from different language and cultural backgrounds interact, play will certainly contribute to combating stereotypes and racial discrimination. Initially, children are unaware of racial factors and are ignorant of the wisdom that supports recognition of stereotypes. Diversity is viewed by some educators as a barrier to learning but in early childhood education it is more likely to provide an opportunity to reveal in

children their skills of learning to live together despite their differences which may be cultural, racial, socio-linguistic, physical or otherwise (Myers, 1990; Erwin, 1998).

Racism and inequality can be '*silenced*' or discouraged in the early childhood education classroom by the manner in which the teacher uses play and learning materials in the classroom (Weikart, 2000). Teachers in early childhood settings should take on the crucial responsibility of teaching children at that age to respect differences. Teaching materials used in the classroom, therefore, should carry the messages that being different from others does not imply inferiority or superiority; the teacher must try to emphasise what is positive.

Again, teachers should not shun talking to children about diversity. Erwin (1998 and Hazareesingh *et al.*, 1989), state that racial differences in early childhood education should be regarded as providing educators with opportunities to be able to adjust their teaching in order to accommodate all children in a given classroom and to show them that one can be different and yet be a meaningful contributor to society. It is therefore clear that early childhood education should adopt a holistic approach in which a child is provided with a variety of creative learning opportunities. Such opportunities should be taken from a range of cultural experiences in which the child learns, not just to accept people whether they are the same or different, but to recognise that the full richness of a community comes from a blend of different cultures. Educators must also be prepared to accept not only who their learners are but also who they, themselves, are as cultural beings and how that influences their teaching strongly. Equally, they should provide children with opportunities to be aware and confident that they deserve respect simply by being themselves, and not only if it can be shown that they are good at an activity (Ackerman, 2001) as well as how they relate to their peers, teachers, parents and other people in society.

2.2.5 Health Promotion in Early Childhood Education

In campaigning for health in early childhood education, Evans *et al.* (2000), Myers (1990) and Weikart (2000), assert that early childhood education programmes with a health and nutrition component are very effective in contributing towards the child's physical well-being and health. Inadequate nutrition during a child's early years of life may interfere with the development of the brain and may lead to disorders such as learning disabilities and mental retardation. Children who normally come to school hungry or are malnourished have reduced cognitive abilities that subsequently lead to lack of motivation and reduced academic performance and to decreased physical ability.

In cases where parents do not realise the importance of children's health, early childhood education can provide immunization campaigns for all children. It can thus prevent malnutrition and underdeveloped cognitive development as well as detect any illness that may require early intervention in order to prevent future developmental delays. In a study undertaken by Myers (1990) on the impact of early intervention programmes in Latin America, it was revealed that participating children were far less likely to have to repeat grades in primary school. Instituting a nationwide ECD programme could save some government funds by reducing repetition rates, especially in the 1st and 2nd year of primary school. Equally, the programmes contributed to enhancing the efficacy of health care and nutrition initiatives. It is therefore crucial that early childhood education should ensure a comprehensive approach to providing health services at early childhood education centres such as safety, nutrition, physical, dental and mental health as well as social services.

The concept of *health promotion* in schools goes beyond immunization and vaccination, and includes the whole aspect of child development in which the community, school, parents and children themselves significantly contribute to developing the individual child and the whole school. The health promotion concept promotes both the formal and informal curriculum in health, the

development of a safe and healthy learning environment and the provision of a safe supporting environment in which parents and the wider community are involved. In countries which are effected by the impact of HIV and AIDS, the concept of health promotion becomes even more important where the whole school community should promote healthy and responsible behaviours starting as early as during the early years of learning. The Department of Education of South Africa (1997), notes that health-promoting schools should:

...include both the formal and informal curricula in health (including physical, social and emotional health), the development of health-promoting policies, the creation of a safe healthy environment, the provision of appropriate support services, and the involvement of the family and wider community in efforts to promote well-being.

The same view is shared by Donald (1996) who points out that the principle of holistic development cannot be compartmentalised but encompasses all aspects of health, social, psychological and physical development considering all aspects of child development within the framework of an ecological and systemic understanding. In addition to addressing the child's basic health needs, an integrated early childhood education programme should provide affection, especially to vulnerable children, intellectual stimulation and supportive human interaction. Inadequate health support services in early childhood education may hinder the provision of a holistic inclusive approach to ECD in Namibia. Namibia should emulate the example of South Africa and adopt a health promotion approach to inclusive education in which all sectors are brought together in addressing aspects of education. Health promotion should thus be integrated into the early childhood education curriculum. In this way the developmental needs of children, especially those with special needs in education, can be addressed in a holistic manner in order to promote equal learning opportunities to children from diverse backgrounds (Donald, 1996; Engelbrecht 2004).

2.2.6 Conclusion

This Section looked at Piaget and Vygotsky's approaches to early childhood development and education. Whereas Piaget believed that child development is primarily influenced by his interaction with the environment, Vygotsky believed in the complex holistic socio-cultural and language influence on child development as the child goes through the zone of proximal development which calls for collaborative learning. In the zone of proximal development, each child can assist the others and each child can learn from the contribution of the teacher as a guide or from other peers.

While the value of play to social and emotional development of children has long been recognised, understanding of its role in cognitive development has developed since the cognitive theories of Piaget and Vygotsky came into prominence. According to Vygotsky, children use symbols to develop abstract thinking. While at play, children often practise newly acquired mental and physical skills such as problem solving, negotiation, discrimination and decision-making. Piaget believed engaging in play behaviour provides practice for such skills but it also leads to consolidation of skills as well.

Play is thus strongly recommended as an avenue for enhancing cognitive competencies of children as it offers the child many opportunities for manipulating, exploring and practising. A well-defined play curriculum should consider the importance of bringing real life playing situations in the early childhood environment in order to allow children to reflect on their daily lives outside the classroom environment. A well-defined integrated curriculum can significantly contribute to enhancing cognitive, social and emotional development and prevent any type of discrimination amongst children in early childhood education centres. There are clear implications for teacher education.

Parents are the children's first and most important teachers at home. The link between home and the early childhood education centre has been emphasised,

including the role of parents in contributing towards their children's development by supporting the early childhood education teacher. Parental contribution to play, especially in enhancing the development of children with barriers in education should be promoted.

2.3 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Rapid social, economic and political changes, both national and international, have resulted in many countries placing more focus on children, and a child's holistic development and hence have raised the significance of ECD (Evans, Myers and Ilfeld, 2000; Lubeck, 2001; Myers, 1998; UNESCO, 2001). Many governments agree that investing in the young child has long-term benefits for the development of a country and its people. Consistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, many governments are now developing policies and programmes aimed at offering children more equitable access to quality education and better services before their formal years of schooling in order to achieve the Dakar 2000 objectives. The benefits of early childhood education in terms of preparing the child for a better education in later years as well as contributing to social development cannot be overemphasised.

Having already considered some perspectives of early childhood education in this chapter, this section will now present examples of early childhood education. Examples are drawn from countries that have diversity in the provision of early childhood education, from policy implementation, teacher qualifications, coordination mechanisms (education and welfare or health) and government funding. It should be noted that the examples quoted are not necessarily backed by the same foundation of resources.

2.3.1 Setting Standards in ECD in South Africa

Education in South Africa, including early childhood education, was racially discriminative and members of the African population received an education inferior to that of the white privileged population. According to Hickson and Kriegler (1991), the apartheid system had a detrimental effect on normal childhood development. This was especially so with regard to black children in the country, and may have resulted in a generation of maladjusted children who may require more than a further generation before that inadequacy in their development is eradicated if they ever lose it. The National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) (1992) report found that childcare in South Africa was perceived as a woman's issues and was thus rather undervalued. During the apartheid era, the government of South Africa gave less attention to the development of early childhood education. Van der Berg and Vergnani (1987:119) described such lack of recognition as:

State provision for pre-school education and care in South Africa can be characterised as totally inadequate, a situation exacerbated by the fact that what state provision there is, occurs inversely to need. State provision can further be characterised as segregated, fragmented, uncoordinated, and as lacking in both a comprehensive vision and a commitment to democratic involvement.

This lack of commitment by the government to providing ECD to children before their formal schooling led to communities, churches and the private institutions and trade unions as well as foundations and international agencies establishing early childhood education centres. Such centres were also opened to meet the basic needs of children who might actually be of school-going age but, who did not yet have the opportunity to attend school at all (NEPI, 1992).

Ten million, out of an approximate population of 43 million people in South Africa, are children below the age of nine years. The Department of Education (2001:7)

reports that roughly 40% of children in the country live in poverty and are at risk of neglect, abuse, infant mortality, low birth weight, poor adjustment to school, increased repetition and school dropouts. In South Africa, potential learners out of the school system include children living on farms, who are not regularly in attendance at school, street children and those who have already dropped out of the education system at an earlier age (Biersteker and Robinson, 2000).

2.3.1.1 ECD Policy Frameworks

The rights of the child are enshrined in Section 28 of the Bill of Rights in the South African Constitution. A number of policies in South Africa make specific reference to the provision of early childhood education and set out detailed recommendations on how early childhood education should be provided in the country.

These include the following:

- Act 108 of 1996 (Bill of Rights), especially 2.28, makes provisions for the right to nutrition, shelter, basic health care and social services, family care or parental care, or the right to appropriate alternative care.
- The Education White Paper 1 of 1995 on Education and Training makes provisions for early childhood education and development from birth to nine years. The Intersectoral National Programme of Action for Children (NPA 1996) prioritises, amongst others, nutrition, child and maternal health, water and sanitation, early childhood education and social welfare development.
- The White Paper on Disability (1997) focuses on very young children with disabilities and places an emphasis on the rights of those children to education and better health services.
- The White Paper for Social Welfare (1996) gives priority to disadvantaged children under five years and especially children under three (Department of Education, 2001; 2002).

- The 1997 *Report on Quality Education For All: Overcoming Barriers to Learning and Development* recommends early identification, assessment and intervention for children with special educational needs, placing more emphasis on early childhood education (Department of Education 2000). The report recommends an integrated inclusive education system for all learners with a strong focus on the early identification of barriers to learning as well as early interventions (Biersteker and Robinson, 2000).
- The Education White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Education: Meeting the Challenges of Early Childhood Development in South Africa (2001), focuses on expanding ECD provisions, correcting the imbalances in provision, ensuring equitable access and improving the quality of delivery of ECD in that country. It equally calls for the establishment of a national system of provision of the Reception Year for children aged 5 years and to ensure that by 2010 all children entering Grade 1 would have gone through an accredited Reception Year Programme. Of particular importance in this Strategic Plan is that efforts are being made to ensure the provision of early childhood education services to children with special needs in education. It places special emphasis on the development of national curriculum statement, practitioner development and career development, health, nutrition, physical development, clean water and sanitation, and a special programme for four year old children from poor families with special needs as well as for those infected with HIV and AIDS.
- The Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education (2001), recognises that all children and youth are different in one way or another and have diverse learning needs due to a number of factors such as age, ethnicity, language, gender, class, disability or HIV and AIDS status. All these needs are equally respected and valued and that all children and youth can learn and need to be supported in order to develop to their full potential. It also calls for a careful evaluation of resources in order to strengthen and transform capacities to contribute towards building an inclusive education system.

Interestingly, although the Act 108 of 1996 mentioned above recommends early interventions against barriers to education, learners with special educational needs will continue to be left out of the education system if the system does not address real policy issues such as teacher education and the improvement of education services for those children who need them most. In order to address the needs of their vulnerable children, the Department of Education is putting more effort into addressing early childhood education for all children in South Africa, from birth to nine years, especially those living in poverty (Department of Education, 1995). An Interim Policy for Early Childhood Development for children from birth to nine years was released in September 1996. Besides, promoting an integrated approach to early childhood education, the Policy emphasises interdepartmental collaboration and the involvement of parents and communities in the provision of this crucial form of education in order to improve the quality of early learning programmes. In order to implement the Interim ECD Policy, a national project was launched to develop a high quality public early childhood education system the Reception Year for 5-year-old children before they enter Grade 1 (Department of Education 2001). The project had the following objectives, amongst others:

- To make and test innovations in the early childhood development field related to the accreditation of ECD providers, curriculum policy and funding subsidy systems.
- To promote an outcomes-based education and assessment in early childhood education in line with the provisions of the National Qualifications Framework.
- To build leadership, management, implementation capacity and early childhood development expertise, particularly at provincial department of education level in conjunction with resource and training organizations.
- To assure quality community-based early childhood development programmes through the provision of funding subsidies and training.
- To ensure that children in the pilot project receive quality Reception Year education.

- To research the most effective means of delivering a public system of Reception Year.

One can describe the key elements governing the ECD Interim Policy as well as the Education White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Education in South Africa as holistic and integrated, in which the full potential of the child is developed. Equally, the policy promotes an education that is relevant to the needs of children and the South African society, in which the curriculum promotes critical thinking and creativity. It further advocates accountability and transparency and calls for good governance at the school in which the participation of parents and the community is fully encouraged. The project was considered as successful, for example, there was an improvement in the quality of education at the community-based sites where the project was piloted with more communities offering high quality early childhood education services. There was also an increase in the number of community-based centres accommodating more learners with special needs in education in the Reception Year. Consequently, the Department of Education, through 2001 Education White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Development puts more weight on the importance of early childhood development and in particular the provisions of the Reception Year to children before they enter Grade 1. However, although the project was regarded a success at the national level, some barriers were experienced at the provincial level, such as subsidising the early childhood practitioners, provision of teaching and learning materials the success of such a project also depended on a strong political will. There is also a call from the Department of Education (2001) to improve the quality of teaching in the Reception Year through the training of early childhood providers in methods that are quality controlled and accredited. Adequate support should also be extended to the providers in order for them to show an understanding of the expected outcomes of learner performance.

Although the policy advocates access to quality ECD in South Africa, access is primarily dependent on the payment of fees. Since the provision of early childhood education is not free and compulsory in South Africa, the majority of

the population living below a certain income are not obliged to take their children to any early childhood education centre. The White Paper on an Integrated Disability Strategy (1997) reported that as many as 70% of school-going age children with disabilities in South Africa are out of the school system, despite the School Act which provides education to children with special needs in education.

In addition to the issue of fees, South Africa is still characterised by inequalities in early childhood education. Services provided for white children are still of higher quality compared to those provided for coloured and African children. Early childhood educators in white schools are better qualified with tertiary education qualifications compared to their counterparts in black schools, with black early childhood education centres characterised by an average teacher/learner ratios of 1:32 compared to 1:13 in white schools (NEPI, 1992). The quality of service provision is notably low in black rural and farm communities as well as amongst children with special needs. Although the White Paper on an Integrated Disability Strategy highlights the importance of access for children with special needs, no special provision is made for the latter children in terms of mainstream education or specialised classes (Department of Education, 2001). Inclusive education in South Africa goes beyond the traditional concept of children with disabilities and considers all children who have been sidelined by the education system due to poverty, the apartheid era, HIV and AIDS and many other social ills. However, the Education White Paper 6 of South Africa discussed in Chapter 3 (3.2.5) provides clear policy guidelines for inclusive education in formal education but has failed to consider inclusive early childhood education, which is not regarded as part of formal education. With the new transformations in the education system of that country, it is expected that early childhood education will equally benefit from legislation and policies pertaining to inclusive education in South Africa.

The tables below give an indication of the glaring disparities in the provision of early childhood education in the nine Provinces in South Africa, with rural areas having fewer services than urban areas.

TABLE 2.1 DISTRIBUTION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRES ACROSS THE 9 PROVINCES IN SOUTH AFRICA

PROVINCE		PERCENTAGE
Eastern Cape	3,231	14%
Free State	1,665	7%
Gauteng	5,308	23%
Kwazulu-Natal	5,684	24%
Mpumalanga	1,367	6%
Northern Cape	,422	2%
Northern Province	1,987	8%
North West	1,174	5%
Western Cape	2,644	11%
Total number of centres	23,482	

Department of Education, 2001:20

Communities and parents are more concerned and involved in the provision of early childhood education than is the government. As Table 2.2 indicates, community-based centres outnumber both home-based and school-based centres.

TABEL 2.2 DISTRIBUTION ACROSS TYPES OF EARLY CHILDHOOD PROVISIONS

PROVINCE		PERCENTAGE
School based	3,623	17%
Community based	10,816	49%
Home based	7,453	34%
Total number of sites	21,892	

Department of Education, 2001:20

Winer (1996) undertook a study on enhancing the emerging literacy of young children in South Africa. The findings of that research project were rather shocking. A majority of the caregivers in one nursery school (Middelburg) had qualifications below Standard 5 and could neither read nor write properly. The table below adapted from Winer (1996:392) shows the number and level of

caregivers who could not read properly.

TABLE 2.3 NUMBER AND LEVEL OF CARE GIVERS WHO COULD NOT READ NOR WRITE

Cannot read or write No Schooling	Std 2	Std 4	Std 5	Std 6	Std 9	Std 10	Total number who have difficulty with reading and writing	Staff who have attended a training course at Ntataise
8***	7*	3**	4	3	1	1	16	25
								+27

Key: *6 struggle with reading

**2 struggle with writing

*** Cannot read at all

One conclusion to be drawn from the findings above is that quality early childhood education will remain a challenge in South Africa if no efforts are made to ensure the training and retraining of early childhood educators and caregivers in order to improve their language and teaching skills and to enhance the quality of early childhood education.

2.3.1.2 Types of ECD Provision

There are different types of centres responsible for the provisions of early childhood education in the country as summarised below. The Department of Education has recently introduced what is called the Reception Year Grade [R] to prepare children for formal education. These centres are mainly attached to primary and independent schools. The Programme is implemented as a national pilot project for ECD, which is aimed at introducing a special grade, Grade R at the primary education level to promote equal educational opportunities for all children aged 5 and 6 years. Its objective is to test current innovations in South

Africa regarding the accreditation and the standards of ECD educators. Below are examples of the various types of ECD programmes offered in South Africa:

- *The Reception Year Grade [R]* at independent schools.
- *The Reception Year Grade [R]* attached to government schools, managed by the school governing body but funded by a private individual or the community. The Department of Education (2001) recommended that all public primary schools should become the sites for the provision of the accredited Reception Year programme with about 75% of the funding provided by the Department of Education.
- Independent provision of Reception Year programmes.
- *Independent pre-primary schools* that provide for children from 3 –5 years of age.
- *Privately operated or community run crèches* or nursery schools that provide for children from birth to 5 years.
- *Home-based provision* for children from birth to five years (Department of Education, 2001:22).

The Department of Education (2001) recommended that some of the community-run early childhood education centres in areas where the public primary schools are not available within a reasonable distance become temporarily part of the public schools in order to provide the Reception Year. Such sites should be eligible for government subsidy and they are expected to fulfil the national policy, norms, and standards on the provision of the Reception Year programmes.

For quality assurance, the Department of Education (2001) recommends that free standing public early childhood education centres should operate within the framework of the South African Schools Act and should be managed by school governing bodies.

Early Childhood Educators at the Grade [R] level are required to have received training in the outcomes-based-education (OBE) approach in ECD. However, despite efforts to ensure that teachers are well prepared, the Reception Grade

[R] has been criticised for neither sufficiently addressing the developmental needs of children under the age of 6 years nor the educational imbalances caused by the Apartheid system. This seems to require a policy that addresses the needs of all early childhood education children from birth to 6 years old.

2.3.1.3 The Quality of ECD Provisions

As explained earlier, the quality and quantity of service provision in early childhood education varies significantly across the country and even within its smaller communities, in terms of curriculum provision, facilities and teaching/learning materials, disparities in teacher qualifications and experience, even including proper health services to children from birth to five years. The Report of the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI, 1992) found that although many black communities offered early childhood services like these, such services were of poor quality and did not meet the basic standards of childcare, thus placing child development at risk. This has led to the Minister of Education to appoint an Interim Accreditation Committee to establish norms and standards for the training of early childhood educators and to establish an accreditation system for training as well as for standard-setting (Department of Education 2001; 2002). Teachers participating in the National Pilot Project for ECD have been expected to show willingness to be trained and to be accredited. If the programme is implemented accordingly, the country will be able to provide universal early childhood education by the year 2015 to all its children irrespective of their race, colour, gender or social and cultural background.

Concerning the provisions of early childhood education to children from birth to 4 years, the Department of Education (2001) recommends, an inter-departmental and inter-governmental collaboration in the implementation of early childhood development programmes and calls for the following as indicated in the UNICEF State of the World's Children 2001 Report:

- Educate and empower parents and caregivers.

- Deliver services directly to children using home visits, home day care, integrated early childhood development centres and formal and informal learning activities.
- Strengthen national resources and capabilities.
- Increase demand for early childhood development programmes and raise awareness of policy makers, planners and the public at large.
- Develop national child and family policies that allow parents increased possibilities for childcare.

2.3.1.4 Community Participation in ECD

Although the Government subsidises ECD in South Africa, parents and communities are responsible for paying the salaries of the ECD educators in private and community-based centres. Funding from the government goes towards managing the development, evaluation and maintenance of ECD programmes. It is important to point out that there are two Departments responsible for coordinated ECD in South Africa. The 0 to 5 age group falls under the responsibility of the Department of Social Welfare, while the 5 to 6 age group is the responsibility of the Department of Education. Such a division in responsibilities may cause some irregularities and imbalances in the provision of funding and services. In most cases, research indicates that ECD received less funding than did primary education, which, if care is not taken, could result in the same imbalances in the provision of funding and therefore in the provision of services and quality of education.

2.3.2 Early Childhood Education in Uganda

Like many of the countries cited in this chapter, the Government of Uganda places great emphasis on the importance of education as a significant

contribution to economic, social and human development. The Government is committed to ensure that universal primary education for all children (6 to 13) is attained through public and community participation in programmes specifically designed to provide quality education (UNESCO, 2002).

A number of national documents such as the Education Strategic Investment Plan (ESIP) 1999-2003 outline the vision for Uganda's education development. It prioritizes the following:

- Achieving universal primary education.
- Enhancing the quality and relevance of instruction.
- Increased equity at all levels.
- Enhancing partnerships between private and public sectors providing education
- Strengthening the role of central government and formulation of laws and policy on education.
- Enhancing the capacity of districts and local governments to provide public educational services.

However, the country is faced with many challenges including the impact of HIV/AIDS on the education sector and on the economy as a whole, high levels of illiteracy amongst its adult population, especially affecting women, and high levels of poverty. Although the government is committed to providing universal primary education to all children in Uganda, some districts in the country may not attain that goal due to environmental conditions. Equally, some regions in the country are geographically isolated and may not have adequate educational facilities thus making the provision of basic education a challenge (UNESCO, 2002). For example, UNESCO (2002) reports that many children in the Karimojong District may not attend school because of their pastoral and semi-nomadic cultures that may not be responsive to the formal education system resulting in a majority of them becoming vulnerable, disadvantaged and excluded. The situation may even be worse in other districts such as Karamoja where UNESCO reported high illiteracy rates. From a total number of about

70,000 school going children in Moroto, only 9000 children were enrolled in school, representing an enrolment rate of 12.6%. In order to ensure access to education for these Ugandan children the Ministry of Education recommended alternative basic education programmes that would be relevant to the needs and interest of children, especially the girl child and parents in the different districts. It is expected that only through the provision of alternative formal and non-formal education will education in that country become inclusive. The challenge raised in the UNESCO report concerning the alternative basic education programmes is that they were brought about through the implementation of a donor-funded project, which may not be sustained after the project has been completed. In order to ensure the sustainability of such programmes, there is a need for full government and community involvement and ownership at all levels both national and district. One may conclude that if the provision of formal basic education in Uganda poses such a challenge, the same may be said about early childhood education, which is not part of the compulsory basic education.

2.3.2.1 ECD Policy Provision in Uganda

The government adopted the Uganda National Programme of Action for Children in order to address such issues effectively and to provide children with the necessary basic services (UNPAC, 1992/93; UNESCO, 2001). Because of this and other programmes, early childhood education is catered for in various national policies. These include, the Government White Paper on Education (1992); the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995); The Children's Statute (1996); and the Local Government Act (1997). The Constitution not only makes provision for the right to education of all children in Uganda, but also makes specific reference to children with disabilities as well as those who are marginalized based on gender or any other historical or cultural reasons. Uganda is amongst the countries that have signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child and is signatory to the recommendations of the World Conference on Education for All (1990) and the Salamanca World Conference on Special Needs

Education (UNISE, 1997).

The demand for pre-primary education is still low in that country (UNESCO, no date) and only about 10% of the total school going children pass through pre-primary schools. There has so far been a lack of government control over this sector resulting into questionable trends regarding the content and quality of the curriculum, teaching methods and facilities, age of entry, quality of teachers and school fees. It has been observed that early childhood education in Uganda is mainly provided by communities in informal school settings and is not compulsory. Another observation made during the researcher's mission to Uganda in November 2004 was that early childhood educators are not necessarily trained or qualified educators but teachers who have shown the love for children and the commitment to provide education to younger children before reaching the formal school age. However, it should be noted that the Ministry of Education and Sports is responsible for the coordination of the government efforts, non-governmental organizations and donor support programmes for children and young adults with special educational needs (UNESCO, 1996).

Evans, Myers and Ilfeld (2000:164), assert that the government formulated and passed a very ineffective Local Government Bill in 1996, without wider national consultation and resulted in the marginalisation of children's issues. This confirms that society and community participation in education is a critical factor in ensuring the effective implementation of policies and legislations in a given country or context. The challenge in Uganda lies in the rationalisation of public funding to provide quality education for all and to ensure that an integrated early childhood education is recognised as an effective means of promoting a child's holistic development. The success of early childhood education depends on the commitment of parents, communities and the government to ensure a good start for young children before their formal education. In the absence of government support for early childhood education, community interest and ownership will be a major investment in the development of and sustainability of an integrated inclusive early childhood education in Uganda.

2.3.3 Summary

This Section looked at the provisions of early childhood education in two countries, namely South Africa and Uganda. It is clear from the literature review that South Africa is moving towards the provisions of early childhood education to benefit all children in the country, including those that were previously disadvantaged. The number of policies and legislation in place in South Africa indicate the commitment of the government of the Republic of South Africa to meet the EFA Goal 1 on ***Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children*** (MBESC, 2002; UNESCO, 2000).

However, it should be pointed out that despite the prominent policies in place in the country, early childhood education remains in the hands of the communities, with the exception of the Grade R. Many of the early childhood education teachers in South Africa are not qualified as ECD educators, which poses a problem with regard to implementing quality programmes. Although Uganda has policies in place for early childhood education, the country is faced with the challenge of HIV and AIDS and poverty which negatively impact on early childhood education, especially in terms of the increase in the number of orphans and other vulnerable children (OVCs)) as well as teacher support services and funding for community early childhood education centres.

2.4 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

2.4.1 New Zealand's Rights-Based Approach to ECD

2.4.1.1 Policy Frameworks

New Zealand is one of the countries with a well-established ECD structure. One

of the positive outcomes of the reform process in New Zealand has been the integration of ECD into the education system, including the whole spectrum of funding, standards and regulations, staffing and curriculum development (Ministry of Education, 1996). With the Education Reform of 1989, the responsibility of early childhood education was transferred from the Department of Social Welfare to the Ministry of Education. This reform means that any centre providing services to more than three children at a time must be licensed under the Education Regulations of 1989 (Ministry of Education, 2002).

A child's learning, development process, interests and cultural background are regarded as the foundation for developing an early childhood education curriculum in New Zealand. The vision of the government of New Zealand is to have all children participate in quality education irrespective of their circumstances, with ECD being the cornerstone of the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education 2002). A child's early learning is seen as making a significant impact on the way they progress throughout their lives, and therefore it is viewed as a contribution towards the development of the nation.

The Ministry of Education with the collaboration of various stakeholders developed a 10-year strategic plan in 2002, which will be able to cater for the needs of the Maori and Pasifika population groups in New Zealand. The plan was developed with a view to:

- Increased participation towards quality in early childhood education services.
- Improved quality of early childhood education services.
- Promoting collaborative partnerships (Ministry of Education, 2002:2).

In addition to encouraging the government to increase its role in development and to increase services provided for early childhood education, the strategic plan is aimed at increasing overall community participation, especially in those communities where access to education seems to be very limited. It is expected that barriers to better education in education will be identified through the

implementation of the strategic plan. The plan also intends to look into the issue of teacher qualification with a view to improving the standard of teaching.

Early childhood education in New Zealand is guided by a rights-approach to education. Regulations pertaining to the provision of ECD stress that early childhood educators should have a policy that ensures the rights, respect and dignity of each child (Ministry of Education, 1998, 2002). Therefore, praise, encouragement and positive guidance are promoted throughout the child's development process. Schools and early childhood education teams are given the responsibility to monitor and support ECD services in order to improve performance of this kind, not just purely academic performance.

Although the early childhood education plan has good intentions, it is worth noting that, due to various factors including the payment of fees, there are still many communities in New Zealand which do not benefit from early childhood education. The government is working on approaches to identify the barriers of the *Maori* and *Pasifika* communities to ECD and to provide innovative solutions.

2.4.1.2 ECD Centres

Although the New Zealand Government stresses the importance of ECD in the country, ECD is not compulsory. Where it does exist, it is being provided by various stakeholders. The Department for Social Welfare does, however, subsidise low-income families who cannot afford to take their children to ECD centres. The main early childhood providers are communities, churches and parent groups and these are likely to offer one or more of the following types of ECD services throughout the country:

- *Education and care centres* provide half-time to full-day education and care services to children from birth to school-going age. Such centres could be privately owned, non-profit making and community-based.
- *Home-based services* consist of a network of home-based caregivers

working under the supervision of a co-ordinator.

- *Kindergartens* implement early childhood education programmes for children between three and five years.
- *Kohanga Reo* provide early childhood programmes in the *Te Reo* and *Tikanga Maori* for children from birth to six years.
- *Licence-exempt Playgroups* are normally operated by community-based groups of parents who meet for one to three sessions per week.
- *Play centres* are supervised and managed by parents for children up to the age of five.
- *The Correspondence Schools* provide distance early childhood education for children from three to five years who cannot attend early childhood education centres due to isolation, illness or other special needs (Meade and Podmore, 2002; Ministry of Education 2002).

Parents have the right to decide which type of centre they wish their child to attend provided that such services are not restricted to children of a particular culture, gender, age and economic status (Ministry of Education, 1996). Each centre is encouraged to keep strong links with the child's home in order to provide children with the opportunity to link what they learn at home with skills acquired through ECD.

2.4.1.3 Training of ECD educators

In order to enhance the quality of education in early childhood, the government has established mechanisms to regulate early childhood teachers in licensed centres who possess a teaching qualification. A Diploma of Teaching Early Childhood Education was established as a benchmark qualification for licensing early childhood education by 2005, in order to increase the number of qualified teachers and to enhance the quality of education.

The New Zealand Qualifications Authority approves this Diploma course. The

Diploma is a fully recognised qualification for credit towards the BEd Degree. Although teachers are required to have a Diploma or Certificate in ECD, there seems to be a shortage of qualified and experienced ECD educators at the Diploma level in New Zealand. In addition to the Diploma in Education, ECD educators are also required to benefit from Continuous Professional Development with funding provided by the Government.

Efforts are also being made to have, by the year 2007, 50% of teachers in early childhood education centres registered as qualified teachers, 80% by 2010 and 100% by 2012 (Ministry of Education, 1998; 2002:14). Equally, the government is trying to promote teaching in ECD as a career as well as to offer scholarships to attract more people into early childhood education teacher training.

2.4.1.4 Curriculum

The national curriculum is based on the hope that children in New Zealand grow up as competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body, spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society (Ministry of Education 1996:9).

The curriculum fully integrates the concept of care and cognitive development avoiding the *top-down approach* to education and placing more emphasis on the full participation of the child while avoiding bureaucracy.

The Ministry of Education has developed the *Whakiri* curriculum, which places emphasis on the diversity of early childhood education provisions in the country, while at the same time respecting local cultures and the local socio-economic environment. The curriculum is governed by the following principles:

- Empowering the child to learn.
- Reflecting on the holistic way in which children learn and grow.
- Including the wider world of family and community as an integral part of

the curriculum.

- Signifying the principle that children learn through responsive and reciprocal relationships with people, places and things (Ministry of Education, 1998:10).

It further recognises and promotes an inclusive approach to early childhood education so that all children with special learning needs are catered for. It encourages early childhood programmes to develop activities that match the children's age and culture in order to engage all children in constructive learning. While teaching children to appreciate diversity and to learn to live together, the curriculum also emphasises social values, rights and responsibilities of children.

2.4.2 Comprehensive Early Childhood Education in Sweden

To date, Sweden is regarded as having one of the best publicly supported early childhood education systems. The country is acclaimed because it has a well-developed early childhood education system. Children are provided with care from the age of 1 to 12 years (Lubeck, 2001; McCormick and Hickson, 1996:59). The Swedish system is based on the assumption that a nation's success in developing a high-quality system of early care and education is predicated on the match between that nation's social construction of childhood and the services offered to children. Early childhood education has been accorded high priority by the government since the 1970s (Deily, 2002; Korpi, 2000), with national and social values, which have influenced the provisions of early childhood education in that country translated into the whole concept of equity and equality (Lubeck, 2001).

2.4.2.1 ECD Policy Framework

The Report of the National Commission on Child Care of 1968 was regarded as

the starting point for the expansion of early childhood education when it emphasised the importance of high quality early childhood care and education to stimulate child development and contribute to growth (Korpi, 2000). This report significantly contributed to early childhood education becoming an integral part of the whole education system in Sweden within the context of lifelong learning.

Early childhood educators are expected to be of high quality with the relevant qualifications and skills to be able to work with young children, who are highly valued and whose rights are to be fully respected. In valuing the rights of children in Sweden, the country established the Office of the Ombudsman in 1993 to monitor the rights of the child according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Korpi, 2000:2-3). Just like for children, individuals and society are expected to contribute to social development in Sweden. While looking after the well being of individuals within society at large individuals are also regarded as valuable members of the society who should equally *contribute* to the well-being of the nation.

The success of the Swedish early childhood development programmes can be seen in the government's commitment to providing good services for children in the country. According to Kagan and Hallmark (2001), in 1997, 2,3% of the Swedish Gross Domestic Product (GDP) went to early childhood education. The provisions of early childhood education and care in Sweden are fully embedded in national policies. For example, while children are still young, parents are entitled to take leave and care for their children at home. They receive full benefits such as 450 days of leave for mothers and fathers or approximately 16 months compensated leave that can be taken until the child has turned eight or until the child starts school. In addition, university education is free or students get low interest loans in order to finance their university study, while parents are given child allowances and full parental support in order to combine their professional careers with family life. In addition, early childhood education and care services are extended to children in need of special education as well as to those termed being at risk, and has thus significantly contributed to the

integration of children with disabilities into society (McCormick and Hickson 1996:59; Korpi, 2000).

According to Kagan and Hallmark (2001), children in Sweden are viewed as:

inherently good and possess the innate sense of responsibility that must be developed. Secondly, they must be allowed to be children while they are being prepared for the future and finally, they are perceived to be social participants from birth.

As a result, particular attention is provided to early childhood education starting from the prenatal stages of development. Children's innocence is appreciated and safeguarded: they are given the opportunity to grow and learn as children, to know their rights and to grow as responsible members of society.

Services for early childhood education in the country are mainly free with high quality and well-funded programmes (Kagan and Hallmark, 2001). Municipalities have the autonomy to provide financial support, while national lotteries and taxes also contribute to funding early childhood education (Lascarides and Hinitz, 2000; Seefeldt and Barbour, 1994). Municipalities have the flexibility to allocate resources according to local needs in order to realize national goals, even though the State still establishes guidelines and financial resources for the implementation of activities at the municipal level. Interestingly, the municipalities are also responsible for providing early childhood education to children in their localities. Each municipality sets fees for early childhood education making provisions for parents who cannot afford to pay fees to be subsidised, thus avoiding discrimination while ensuring that all children benefit from the same education provisions.

2.4.2.2 ECD Services

The provisions of early childhood education in Sweden are based on the notion

that children are children and should be encouraged to grow as children by promoting a culture of childhood, self expression, respect for the self and others and to grow as responsible adult citizens who can contribute to the well being of the nation (Myers, 2000; Haddad, 2002). As can be seen in South Africa and New Zealand, there are different types of early childhood education services in Sweden. These are:

- *Pre-schools*, which offer full time services to pre-school children of working parents. These centres are open through the year with hours adjusted to meet the needs of working parents. The centres follow a national curriculum and university-qualified teachers are employed.
- *Family day-care homes*, parents who take their children to these private homes are those who require special support due to the nature of their work. These centres are open all year round as well as during weekends and evenings. Parental groups run these centres with municipality subsidies. These centres may also offer evening or weekend services to different categories of parents who may be in need.
- *Open preschools* offer part time services to children, who are not enrolled in any other programme. Parents are expected to accompany their children to such centres and to participate in their children's education.
- *Leisure-time centres* are for children between the ages of six to nine years whose families work or study and may need support in caring for their children. Services at such centres are offered during school holidays or when the children are not in preschool.
- *Preschool classes* are offered to all 6-year-old children in their communities, including to those children regarded as having special educational needs. These classes are offered on a half-day basis and use a special curriculum linked to the national curriculum for formal education. Although the programme is voluntary, 98% of all 6-year-old children attend (Kagan and Hallmark 2001; Korpi 2000).

2.4.2.3 Curriculum

The 1998 national curriculum of early childhood education in Sweden aims to foster positive attitudes to democratic principles, to equity and equality, to solidarity and to responsibility among children between one and five years. It stresses the overall being of the child, emphasising a holistic approach to child development, while taking into account individual children's needs and interests. Play is regarded as a very important aspect of child development and learning with this aspect of education primarily based on the theory of Froebel. Some of the curriculum programmes adopt the Montessori approach. The curriculum caters for the rights of children, even those with disabilities and their right to integration (Lascarides and Hinitz, 2000; McCormick and Hickson, 1996).

Despite the fact that the Swedish pre-school curriculum is based on the values and principles of the state-established curriculum, it does not specify the *means* by which the curriculum should be achieved. Leaving decisions about implementation to the respective municipalities may have local benefits, but it can also result in uncoordinated ECD services being provided in the country (Kagan and Hallmark (2001).

2.4.2.4 Teacher Education

Early childhood educators in Sweden benefit from a high quality teacher education programme, putting them amongst the best-qualified teachers in the world (Kagan and Hallmark, 2001). According to estimates, 98% of early childhood providers in Sweden have a qualification. There are four programmes for pre-school teachers in Sweden. The highest of these is the three- and-a-half years university degree course that focuses on theories of learning and child development, family sociology and teaching methodologies. The second highest qualification is the three-year programme offered in secondary schools for those students who are interested in becoming child- minders. The programme offers

basic skills in childcare and developmental psychology. Students graduating from this programme are expected to work in pre-school centres across the country. They work alongside a pre-school teacher, or in the children's own homes as family child-minders. Family day-care mothers (third programme) are another group of child minders. However, they are not necessarily expected to have obtained any formal qualification in early childhood education. In order to provide better services to children, municipalities have introduced 'family day training' programmes for these mothers, who should attend a 50 – 100 hours introductory training programme to family day-care occupation. The final category of training is the leisure-time pedagogue (fourth programme), who works alongside a pre-school teacher, while taking university courses with students who are training to become pre-school teachers.

Having noted the importance of ECD provision in Sweden, coupled to the fact that the Government is fully committed to implementing its policies and programmes and to ensuring quality ECD through the training of educators, one cannot but appreciate the major strides made in early childhood education in Sweden.

2.4.3 Early Childhood Education in England

2.4.3.1 Policy Framework

Early childhood education in England was regarded as a family responsibility in which little or no support was provided to children under the age of 3-years-old by the Department of Health. However, with new challenges facing the education systems of many countries, and recognising the contribution of mothers to the economy through employment, the country has started paying some attention to early childhood education with the government policies bringing about reforms in ECD. These reforms led to moving the responsibilities of early childhood from the Department of Health to the Department for Education and Employment. A

National Early Childcare Strategy and a *Sure Start Programme* for children below the age of 3 years and their families in disadvantaged communities was introduced, including securing funding for ECD and putting in place a structure to implement a national qualifications and training framework in early childhood education (Haddad, 2002). Although such structures were put in place, confusion remains with regard to the provisions of early childhood education in England.

ECD policy implementation is uncoordinated and fragmented across the stakeholders: education, health, social services, voluntary organisations and the private sector all have a role to play in implementing their individual policies (Haddad, 2002; Bertram and Pascal, 1997). The national early childhood policy stresses the importance of shared responsibilities amongst parents, communities and the private sector in the provision of ECD in England, but this sharing can have a deleterious effect on the overall appearance of the programme across the country. Strength and quality differ greatly.

Although national reports and the apparent policy stress the importance of quality and a coordinated early childhood education for children of 3 to 4 years old in England, the quality of ECD is described as:

- Poor with poor facilities.
- Lack of equipment.
- Unsuitable expectations and objectives.
- Inappropriate curriculum.
- Poor staffing ratios.
- Inappropriate training, monitoring and evaluation of improved learning (Bertram and Pascal, 1997).

Monitoring education quality has been made difficult due to a lack of coordinated services. Ball (1994), states that the Royal Society of Arts Report indicates that:

...the diverse pattern of provision in the UK...makes it difficult to ascertain and monitor the quality of learning experiences offered to young children. There is lack of thorough and systematic quality

review, and a need for appropriate and rigorous procedures for quality development and assurance for all centre based early learning.

It is obvious that if there is no proper monitoring and evaluation of the quality of ECD programmes, including funding modalities. There is a greater risk of implementing uncoordinated programmes, some of which may have very little impact on children's development and learning. Each programme should be evaluated within the realms of the broader national policies on early childhood education and closely related to the actual curriculum models in place. There will always be a need to evaluate not only the ECD programmes on their own, but also the improvements that they provide over the previous normal curriculum. It would appear that England is not effecting such evaluation and is thus not well placed to assess the strengths of new curriculum models.

2.4.3.2 Curriculum

Children in England start school as early as the latter part of their fourth year, resulting in their having to go through the formal curriculum sooner than their peers in other countries do. Consequently, the school-based programmes may not be relevant and appropriate to children as young as 4 years old. This is because the focus of the school efforts may be mainly on delivering the national curriculum instead of focusing on the developmental needs of the younger child. The national curriculum for the 1st two grade years (Reception year and Grade 1) for children between the ages of 4 and 6 years is very much an ECD based curriculum. The only challenge is that this curriculum tends to be hidden with the Key Stage 1 or the national curriculum that is a general curriculum for years 1–4. There are literacy and numeracy programmes in place that give very specific ideas about the kinds of pre-maths and pre-literacy skills are appropriate for Reception year 1 (www.standards.dfes.gov.uk).

2.4.3.3 ECD Services

Administrative responsibilities for early childhood are still divided between the Department of Health and that of Education and skills, with education extending its services only to children between the ages of 3 and 4 years old (Haddad, 2002), while child care is the responsibility of parents who are expected to pay for such services depending on their income. Three and 4-year-old children who are attending ECD are to be found in play centres which are run by parents and volunteers; only a very few of these places are funded by the government. Services for children under the age of 3 years old are funded by the health and social service sectors, and these are mainly for 'at risk' children or those who have special educational needs.

2.4.4 The Coordination of ECD in the United States of America

Kindergartens became known in America as early as 1856, before the civil war. German nationals who were determined to teach their children about German values and thus preserve their cultural heritage through the teaching approach of Froebel were the ones who mainly established Kindergartens in the United States of America (Gilley and Gilley, 1980; Lascarides and Hinitz, 2000; Seefeldt and Barbour, 1994). Early childhood education in the United States was greatly improved after the Great Depression in the 1930s and after the Second World War when the Works Progress Administration established fully funded, full- day comprehensive school programmes. Piaget and Vygotsky's theories of learning and development became more popular in the United States during the 1960s. Schools for young children in America aimed at instilling love, discipline, obedience and hard work, qualities based on the principles of Christianity. Such education had previously been the responsibility of parents at home and there were hopes that schools could assume part of their responsibility. Thus, the introduction of nursery schools in the United States contributed to a better appreciation of the value of early childhood education outside the child's home.

Introducing nursery schools as places that provided more care, love and education broadened the concept of Kindergartens. Research indicates that early childhood education grew rapidly in the United States as nursery schools became more widespread. Only 12% of children below the age of 5 attended early childhood education in 1915, but 71% of children in the 1st or 2nd grade had attended a childcare centre or a nursery school in the USA by 1991, making education for five year olds almost a universal reality (Seefeldt and Barbour 1994:14).

2.4.4.1 Policy Framework

There are no nationally adopted policies and curricula or standards for early childhood education in the United States of America because education is a State responsibility. Nevertheless, after considerable efforts to develop certain national standards, 15 recognised national curricula have been developed in the hope that they will be used by a larger number of State education authorities (Haddad, 2002). However, none of these curricula has been adopted nationally. Policy development and implementation as well as standard setting are left to the discretion of individual States. Kagan and Hallmark (2001) state that:

The lack of nationally adopted standards for teacher training and education has left many states to set requirements for teacher qualifications. Only 10 states require teachers in early child care programs to have either qualification or a bachelor's degree with a specialization in early childhood education. Teacher qualifications for the remainder of these states run a gamut from CDA (Child Development Associate), to a few pre-service college courses, to a designated number of annual clock hours of training, to no training at all.

In the absence of such national policies, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) developed national guidelines for a

developmentally appropriate early childhood education for children from birth to 8 years, stressing the complex nature of a child's development, including cognitive and social-emotional development (Kagan and Hallmark, 2001; NAEYC, 1994). Chapter 3 (3.2.2) provides specific examples of the different legislations on inclusive education in place to benefit early childhood education in that country. Some states have established their own set of criteria and requirements. Some states are offering monetary incentives and promotions to encourage teachers to obtain qualifications in early childhood. ECD is now being expanded and institutionalised in America because of the growing recognition that it is no longer just a custodial exercise for children from the less well-off sector of society, but rather it is an important component in the development of all children.

Unlike Sweden where public funding is allocated to early childhood education, there is no national funding system devoted to early childhood education in the United States of America. There are three funding sources:

Firstly, *Federal Government*, which funds the Head Start Programme, which target low-income families. Funding from the Federal Government may be in the form of direct funding for programme services or it may come from the school or parents in the form of reduced taxes.

Funding for Head Start is managed by the Head Start Bureau, the Administration on Children and Families and by the US Department of Health and Human Services. Local public agencies receive their Head Start contributions directly from the Administration on Children and Families Offices. These funds are used for programme implementation including support to training and technical services, research, monitoring and evaluation of programmes. The Child Care and Development Fund is another type of funding from Federal Government to support low-income families to improve the quality of childcare.

Secondly, *Families* are expected to contribute significantly to early childhood education in the USA. Those that cannot afford to pay for ECD services for their

children receive a State subsidy.

Thirdly, *State funding* is evident as the individual states apply various modalities of funding for early childhood education. Some States, such as Georgia have instituted a State lottery specifically to benefit education, while California has introduced a sales tax on cigarettes also for education. Other support services provided by some states are in the form of State subsidies to families who cannot afford to send their children to early childhood education centres. Although these programmes are supposed to work in collaboration with all other states, they operate in an uncoordinated manner and often appear to be competing for children, funding and staffing (Kagan and Hallmark, 2001).

2.4.4.2 Curriculum

Many American communities cannot afford to offer their children early childhood education. With regard to the subject of coordination, Kagan and Hallmark (2001) note that there are 15 nationally recognised early childhood education curricula in the United States of America, with none adopted at the national level. Curricula are determined at the level of each state and institution, including the qualifications of early childhood educators. Education is a local matter; it is not national with regard to implementation.

In describing the importance of ECD in a number of different countries, Lubeck (2001) considers the provisions of early childhood education in America as a “source of national embarrassment and personal anxiety”. According to Lubeck, whilst ECD in America can be as strong as the statistics quoted above (for a few fortunate communities), the situation overall is largely uncoordinated with insufficient funding and with only weak efforts being directed towards teacher qualification.

2.4.4.3 ECD Services

As discussed in 2.4.4.1 above, a comprehensive programme called Head Start was introduced in the summer of 1965 to correct inequalities of educational opportunities in the early childhood years. Gilley and Gilley (1980) refer to the establishment of Head Start as a national response to the “war of poverty”. Its main purpose is to reduce educational barriers in low-income families from minority groups, especially those who could not afford the luxury of sending their young children to early childhood education. This was also regarded as helping to cater for the needs of children with disabilities and to prepare them for the otherwise sudden culture change associated with the beginning of school (Curtis, 1992; Kagan and Hallmark, 2001; Landers, 1992).

Head Start encourages good relationships between the school and home in order to breach the differences that are bound to exist between learning and social attitudes at home and at school; the prime hope is to arrange greater continuity between home and school. By 2001, Head Start Programme had benefited over 19 million children between 3 and 4-years-old in the USA. About 900,000 children were enrolled in Head Start in 2001 (Education, USA, 2001; Archibald, 2004).

The Head Start Programme consists of a comprehensive health programme and covers aspects of education, health, nutrition, psychological services, career development and parental and community involvement in the whole education programme (Administration for Children and Families, 2002; Seefeldt and Barbour, 1994:11; Barnett, Hustedt, Robin, Psy and Schulman, 2004). The programme aims at developing the full potential of the child, while promoting self-confidence, self-expression, self-discipline and curiosity amongst the children. It also aims to improve their understanding and appreciation of their environment.

In order to address the challenges faced by Head Start, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) proposed a national universal early childhood education

programme. The programme was aimed to expand Head Start to include children up to 4 years of age, to improve overall services within schools and to ensure parental involvement plus the health initiatives (Education USA, 2001), which, it is believed, must form an integral part of preparation for schooling.

There are some contradictory perceptions about the success of Head Start. While some studies show that Head Start programmes have contributed significantly to the language development of children as young as two years old in cases where parents have been overtly supportive of their children's education (Education, USA, 2001). However, the programme is considered to have failed to contribute towards emotional and social growth at home and failed to contribute towards sustained psychological development. The implication is that purely academic advancements, such as language as referred to above, can be greater, whereas the cultural and emotional development, which probably relate to the child's home life are not being affected significantly. According to some recent surveys (Merrow, 2002; Schweinhart, 2002), children in Head Start programmes are not learning as much as they are supposed to be learning and they lag behind more affluent peers in vocabulary, early writing and math awareness when they enter kindergarten. Clearly, the objectives of Head Start programme and the changed objectives of the kindergarten clearly need to be scrutinised. At present they do not entirely provide satisfactory early childhood education.

2.4.5 Summary

This section discussed the provisions of early childhood education in selected developed countries. It is clear that the development and implementation of a coherent integrated policy of early childhood education focusing on the holistic development of the child is very important in countries like Sweden and New Zealand. It is equally clear that like developing countries, developed countries are also faced with the challenge of coordinating their early childhood education services. This is the case with the United States of America and England. A

number of countries also place emphasis on the *rights approach* to early childhood education and on developing, not only the child's social and emotional skills but also on focusing on learning to live together.

While some countries may not consider the important of government funding for early childhood education, Sweden and New Zealand make provision in their state budgets to fund early childhood education.

2.5 CHALLENGES FACING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT POLICY IN NAMIBIA

2.5.1 Introduction

Although early childhood education in Namibia has a long history, literature on this subject matter is very hard to find. There are however, some reports on projects implemented through the support of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and some annual reports from the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare. Academic literature on and research undertaken in the area of early childhood in Namibia are hard to find.

It is obvious from the literature available (Republic of Namibia, 1996; MWACW, 2001/2002; MWACW, 2003/2004; Report of the Presidential Commission on Education, 1999) that communities and churches played and continue to play a crucial role in the provision of early childhood education in Namibia before 1990. However, evidence is not easily found about the quality of services provided and the mechanisms through which these services were coordinated in the centres where early childhood education flourished.

As discussed in Chapter 1, after independence, the Government started putting

mechanisms in place to address the imbalances caused by the apartheid system, including the issue of early childhood education in the country. The Government's commitment to meeting the needs of children was expressed at the legislative level in the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia. **Article 15** is specifically on the rights of the child. These are rights to survival, protection and development, while **Article 20** makes reference to the right to basic education for all children aged 6 to 16 years.

In order to become part of the wider international community and to benefit from international developments, shortly after the country's independence, Namibia formally joined the international community when the country ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Government further committed itself to addressing the needs of children at a national level by placing early childhood education under the direct responsibility of the Ministry of Health and Social Services (MoHSS). To facilitate the promotion of good child health care, that Ministry developed and implemented a Policy on Primary Health Care. The policy stressed child nutrition, the provision of safe water and basic sanitation, community health education and training, as well as immunization against childhood diseases and renewed support for general mental health care for children (Hubbard, 2000 and MRLGH, 1996).

In addressing the challenges faced by ECD in the country, the Government of the Republic of Namibia GRN/UNICEF Master Plan of Operations of Programme of Cooperation for the period of 2002-2005 provides a framework from which ECD can be further developed. Similarly, the Education for All National Plan of Action (2003–2015) has identified projects and programmes in which interventions are required to develop early childhood care and education in Namibia. Such interventions include the revision of the National Early Childhood Development Policy, the development of a training programme for early childhood educators to be institutionalised by MBESC; a NIED approved early childhood education curriculum and the provision of education to children with special educational needs in early childhood education. The ETSIP (2005) has developed a 'road

map' to improve the management and delivery systems that relate to ECD and pre-primary schools which focuses on the holistic development of the child.

In 1994, the Ministry of Regional, Local Government and Housing (MRLGH), with the support of local NGOs, formed an Inter-Ministerial Task Force to develop a National Early Childhood Development Policy. This Policy was eventually developed and launched in 1996. The important role of early childhood education is recognised in the Foreword to the National Early Childhood Development Policy:

The future prosperity of any nation, whether in terms of the standard of education, or political stability, rests in the hands of its children as future leaders (Republic of Namibia, 1996:2).

In other words, this statement recognises that early childhood education cannot be divorced from political, social or economic discourse, but should have a holistic approach in which parents and the community play a role. A number of critical objectives aimed at addressing the developmental aspects of children as well as the coordination and implementation of the Policy were identified in that the Policy:

- Speaks directly to the issues of young child development in order to make the public more aware of the situation of young children and the importance of ECD provision.
- Clarifies the role of government in the provision of and support for ECD services and indicates its commitment to the welfare of children and the future they present.
- Consolidates and systematizes existing laws, programmes and activities related to ECD for the maximum benefit of all children, particularly those in rural areas and those living in difficult circumstances.
- Brings together the sectors involved in ECD programming, providing them with a framework within which to take action, and allowing for the coordination of their efforts.
- Clarifies the roles, responsibilities and relationships among Government,

churches, NGOs, the private sector, communities and families for the betterment of children.

- Mobilises and allocates resources for ECD programmes, within the government and from other sources.
- Provides guidelines and standards for those wishing to develop quality ECD programmes (MRLGH, 1996:25-26).

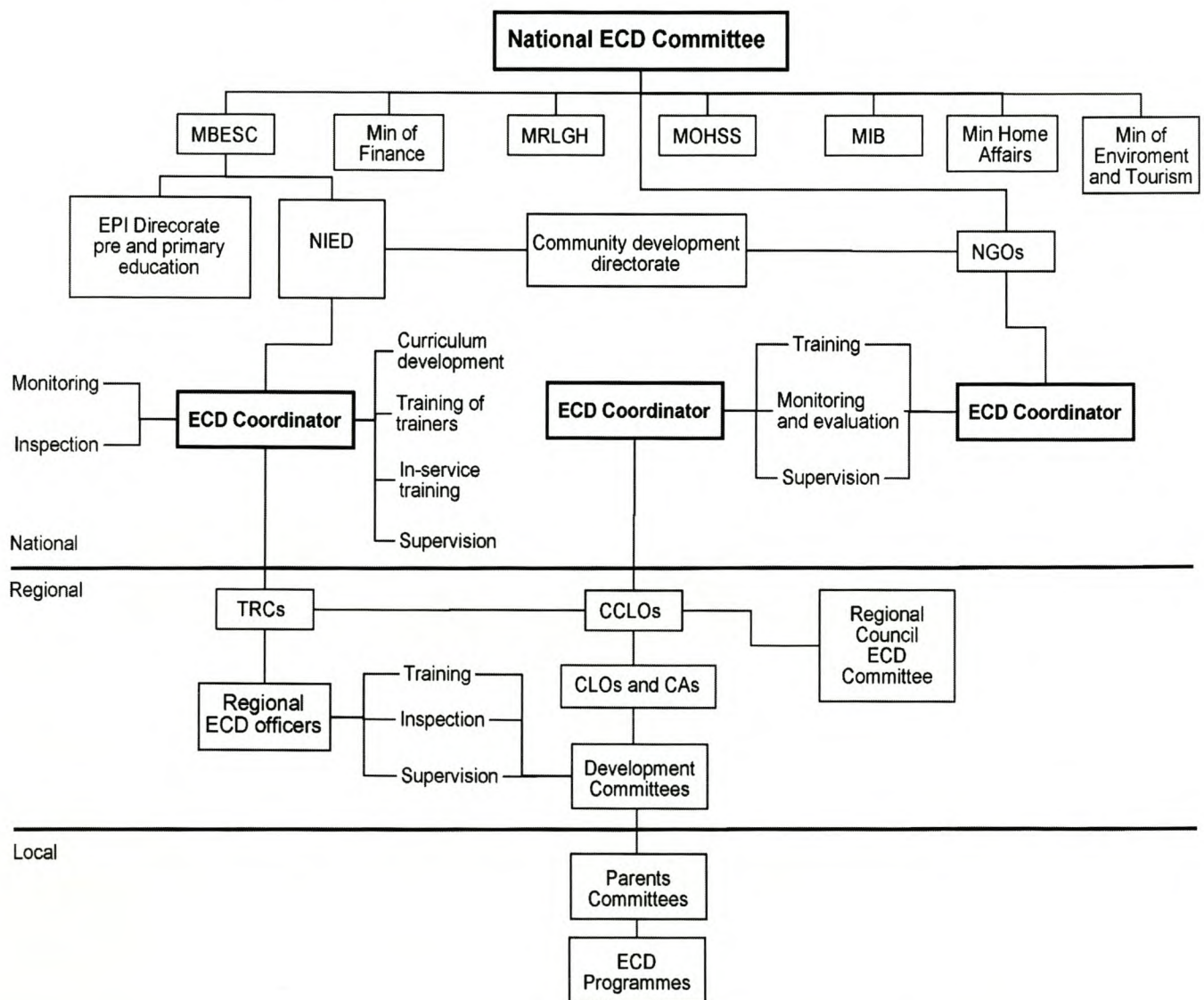
Fully cognisant of the importance of quality education, and in response to the Policy, the MWACW has instituted standards and guidelines for the operation of early childhood education centres and has introduced a system of monitoring and evaluating the quality of education provided at the ECD centres. It has also developed delivery and training programmes for ECD educators (EFA, 2001:28-29). However, although such guidelines have been developed, they were never translated into local languages making their access and full utilisation limited.

The Government established the National Early Childhood Development Committee (NECDC), which was mandated to coordinate efforts of all stakeholders in ECD. This move was regarded as a move to enhance the effective implementation of early childhood in Namibia and to avoid any duplication of activities. The NECDC was created with the aim of:

- Setting policy in relation to ECD provision.
- Monitoring the implementation of the National ECD policy.
- Evaluating the effectiveness and relevance of the ECD policy.
- Proposing amendments to the ECD policy.
- Establishing each Ministry's responsibility in policy implementation.
- Ensuring the existence of coordination mechanisms amongst ECD stakeholders.
- Examining current labour laws and legal structures aimed at supporting ECD and recommend any changes of policy if and when necessary.
- Advocating more attention to the needs of young children.
- Educating communities about the importance of ECD.

A number of structures were put in place to involve all relevant stakeholders in the coordination of activities and the implementation of the policy. Figure 2.2 below clearly indicates the ECD coordination structure and the functions of the stakeholders.

FIGURE 2.2 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION COORDINATION STRUCTURES



The structure clearly displays the involvement of all stakeholders in the coordination of all aspects of ECD, including funding, primary health care, social welfare, housing, parental involvement and other developmental and environmental programmes to meet the diverse needs of all children in an integrated manner. Whether the structure will be fully implemented at national level remains to be seen. The current policy is under revision with the support of UNICEF funding. The structure of the Early Childhood Committee is expected to change in order to reflect the new developments with regard to the responsibilities of all stakeholders involved in early childhood education, including the new roles of the Regional Councils and Community Development Officers.

2.5.2 Curriculum

As indicated in the National Policy, ECD was coordinated by the MRLGH, and was mandated at the national level to develop guidelines, standards, regulations and procedures for establishing, registering, evaluating and monitoring ECD programmes. Its mandate was also extended to cover the development of a curriculum and to build up the capacities of community activators and community liaison officers as well as to train parents and other community members in ECD issues. The National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) within the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture was then given the responsibility to develop, already in 1996, a national ECD curriculum to train ECD educators in the country. Emphasis was to be placed on an integrated approach to comprehensive early childhood education in which the role of parents and communities is stressed. In light of the impact of HIV and AIDS on the Namibian society and the increase in the number of orphans and other vulnerable children, the curriculum will also include aspects of health and nutrition education, parental or family education, and home-based care, as well as the overall cognitive and psycho-social development of the child.

The syllabus recognises the importance of theories that have made a significant impact on the nature of early childhood education in many countries across the world. In particular, it makes reference to the theories of child development of Piaget, Froebel and Dewey by stating that Dewey believed that

true education originated in activity and that play was an essential part of the education process. Dewey emphasized...the importance of the social context in a child's developing understanding of self-relation with others. Piaget has helped us to understand how learning takes place through problem solving and how teachers may be able to facilitate that learning (MBESC, 2004:3).

What is positive about the syllabus is that the content includes all aspects of early childhood development, including the need for the early childhood educators to be able to detect any developmental challenges, special needs education, gender parity in ECD and the importance of learning through play.

Topics and Sub-topics and Approaches in the curriculum include:

Topics and Sub-topics	Approaches
Physical development	Be conscious of body movements
Social and emotional development	Develop respect, values, tolerance, self-control and independence
Intellectual (cognitive development)	Use methods that are appropriate for the child's growth pattern, not only in the cognitive area, but also in the affective, perceptual and motor areas
Perceptual development	Develop visual perception
Hygiene	Emphasize the importance of a clean and tidy surrounding/environment
HIV and AIDS	Handle infected and affected children with necessary care and sensitivity
Safety	Discuss with children dangers at home e.g. boiling water, electrical plugs, etc.
Orphans	Negotiate the enrolment of orphans to ECD centers
Impairment/disability	Treat these children with respect, empathy and equality

The curriculum seems to have covered all the important aspects of early childhood education and development. However, the impact of such training

remains to be seen. How effective can a 12-week training course be on a teacher who has never received any training in education or in early childhood education and who is expected to adopt a holistic and inclusive approach to early childhood education? The syllabus is yet to be completed and disseminated nationally.

2.5.3 ECD Services

It is important at this point to note that, since early childhood education is not included within the definition of formal education, early childhood education in Namibia is neither compulsory nor free. Access to ECD services remains the priority of the parents and communities. As a result, children whose parents cannot afford to send them to ECD centres or who do not see the benefits of education are not obliged to send their children to such programme. Such practices mean that the provisions of early childhood education benefit only the minority of children while the majority who live in poverty are denied such access. This includes children with other vulnerabilities (Report of the Presidential Commission on Education, 1999; World Bank, 2004).

The 2001 National Population Census revealed that, although the government has put in place policies and mechanisms to address imbalances in the education system, the country is still faced with a number of challenges concerning access, equity and the provisions of a quality education to its citizens. Out of a total of 200 010 children aged 3 to 6 years only 63 804 were attending an early childhood development programme, representing 31,9% of the total population in 2001, with regional disparities in the provision of ECD. In the Caprivi, Kavango, Kunene and Otjozondjupa regions less than 20% of children between 3 and 6 years old were attending ECD programmes. The Khomas, Omusati and Oshana regions recorded a net enrolment rate of over 40% in 2001.

With early childhood education being the responsibility of communities, and other stakeholders, they may be placed in the following categories:

- *Pre-primary school programmes*, which are designed to promote child development and increase children's readiness for primary education. Such programmes are mainly found at some of the very few private schools in Namibia, which were previously white advantaged schools. Fees to enter such schools are probably too high for the ordinary Namibian citizen to send his/her child. Teachers at these centres normally have the relevant qualifications and experience. These centres cater for children from four to six years. Some pre-primary school programmes were run by the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) and were attached, in some instances, to a primary school. However, after 1994 the Ministry of Basic Education was no longer responsible for pre-primary education (MRLGH, 1996) and it is now under the responsibility of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare as earlier indicated.
- *Pre-school/kindergartens* normally take in children to care for them while their parents are away at work, and may take any age group of children from birth to six years. They are mainly community or church-based or private and are thus not funded by the government. Although education makes up part of their programme, efforts are placed mainly on the well-being and safety of the child, especially for the younger children. The majority of the caregivers in the centres do not necessarily have the relevant qualification or training in ECD or related matters and at present there is no law that requires qualifications for custodial actions related to these very young children. The National ECD policy distinguishes between a crèche and a day-care centre. According to the policy, a crèche provides full day-care services for children from infancy to 3 years old, while a day-care centre caters for children between the ages of 3 and 6 years.

The National Early Childhood Education has recommended the creation of ECD National Trust Funds to be managed by the National ECD NGO to ensure access quality improvement for ECD Centres. The Trust Fund is to be supported through the Public Sector Investment Programme of the National Planning Commission and by the State Lottery to be introduced. This Trust is not yet operational. It is

also recommended that there be a clear distinction between the age group 0 to 3 years and 4 to 6 years (Report of the Presidential Commission, 1999).

2.5.4 Training

There are no standard regulations or laws pertaining to the qualifications of early childhood *educators* and caregivers in Namibia. A consequence of this is that any one can open and run an early childhood education centre, irrespective of their knowledge and experience in education, resulting in low quality ECD service provisions in the country. As indicated earlier, unlike for primary or secondary school teachers, there is no professional qualification for early childhood educators in Namibia. Training is provided through short workshops (up to two weeks) by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Ministry of Women Affairs and Child Welfare now the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare (World Bank, 2004), and by some NGOs working in the field of education mostly through short courses (up to 12 weeks) or shorter training workshops of up to two weeks.

The four colleges of education and the University of Namibia offer teacher-training courses. The BETD In-service Training Programme (Basic Education Teachers Diploma) is a diploma course offered at the four colleges of education for primary school teachers while secondary school teachers receive their training at the University of Namibia. No specific courses in early childhood education are offered at any of the tertiary institutions in Namibia. However, the syllabi offered at the colleges of education as well as the University of Namibia have sensitisation modules covering some aspects of child development, special needs education and guidance and counselling. These courses are offered mainly to sensitise student teachers to the needs of learners with special educational needs rather than to prepare them to be able to teach children with special needs in education in inclusive settings. The consequence of such training implies that students qualify as teachers with only minimal knowledge and exposure to inclusive and special needs approaches to education (Möwes,

2002; Chataa, Evura, Kapalu and Opperman, 2002; Mostert, Zimba, Hengari, Möwes, Haihambo-Mwetudhana and Mwoombola, 2002). Students who have completed their BETD INSET Diploma courses are reluctant to teach at early childhood education centres because of the fact that early childhood education is considered a sector where educators are not normally qualified. Therefore the ECD sector continues to be taught by a majority of unqualified and inexperienced educators who can not adequately prepare children for formal education.

In order to demystify early childhood education, there is, therefore, a need to develop diploma or degree courses in early childhood education at the level of the colleges of education. Such courses will also play a role in regarding early childhood education as an important profession. They should be developed based on a revised BETD INSET Diploma courses. This will allow primary school teachers to teach, where necessary, in early childhood education centres or early childhood educators will have been prepared and developed the necessary skills and methodologies also to teach at the lower primary education level.

2.5.5. Challenges Facing the Implementation of the National ECD Policy

Although the National Early Childhood Development Policy was established with the aim of defining the parameters of ECD in the country and defining the roles of respective partners in the provision of ECD in Namibia, ECD is still faced with a number of challenges that need to be addressed in a holistic manner.

The Government spends over 25% of its GNP on education. However, it considers the provisions of universal early childhood or pre-primary education to Namibia children as not viable (World Bank, 2004) so it is therefore not part of the formal education system. Although the national education budget is the highest in the country, the ECD budget is very small and is mainly utilised for the upgrading of ECD centres without necessarily looking into the issues of training

and provision for materials for children.

Other challenges facing the implementation of the ECD Policy include the lack of:

- Professionalism in the coordination and implementation of ECD.
- Trained human resources as ECD educators and special needs educators.
- Proper ground rules to establish the standards of ECD in the country and;
- Proper guidelines on the provisions of ECD to children according to the age categories 0 to 3 and 4 to 6 years old.

In addition, the present plan of action for ECD does not correspond closely to the Policy, with some aspects in the plan of action being already outdated. Furthermore, there is currently no accreditation standard for ECD educators and caregivers which could make it necessary for them to have an academic qualification and be accredited.

The 2001 Population Census report (Republic of Namibia, 2003) indicates that there are glaring disparities between rural and urban centres with regard to access and quality early childhood education. Although the early childhood centres have grown in number, there are no control mechanisms in place to regulate the establishment of new centres.

Furthermore, there is no proper monitoring and evaluation done on the quality of work in the centres. Whilst the large number suggests that access to ECD has become easier, the country can hardly be proud of this achievement if the access is not accompanied by quality. During the year 2002, 1152 OVCs were enrolled in ECD centres in four regions in Namibia. Nonetheless, there are still a number of challenges facing the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare with regard to the enrolment of other children with special needs in ECD.

Research indicates that caring practices for children between 0 and 3 have an impact on young children's survival, growth, psychosocial, and cognitive

development (Bredenkamp, 1987; Evans, Myers and Ilfeld, 2000; Hanline, 1998). Equally, access to early childhood education for children between the ages of 3 and 6 years-old is critical in preparing them for formal education. Currently access to early childhood education and development programmes is limited with regional disparities to the disadvantage of the poor and of rural communities. The absence of reliable national data and indicators on, inter alia, the demand for pre-primary education makes it difficult to appropriately identify the target gaps and effectively respond to the demand.

2.6 SUMMARY

In this chapter, a number of key theories related to early childhood education have been discussed. It is evident that Piaget has made significant contributions to early childhood education and development through his theory of cognitive development. However, evidence has been presented to show that real delivery of Piaget's objectives has not yet been achieved in many places in the world where there is support for his ideals.

It is clear that the quality of early childhood development has a significant impact on the child's entire life. Children require informed and systematic interactions and experiences provided in a safe learning environment in order to develop cognitively, socially as well as emotionally. The rights of the child have been emphasised, including the right to education of those children with special educational needs. Furthermore, attention has been given to the importance of play and the relationship of this activity to the child's cognitive and social development.

Examples of different early childhood education provisions in developed and developing countries have been provided. From the countries selected, it is clear that there are different models of early childhood education in western and non-western countries. There are those that are designed to respond to the needs of

working parents and their children, as Sweden, and those that are designed to prepare children for their formal education such as the South African Grade R. Other forms of ECD are less coordinated, such as the US example. In countries such as Sweden, ECD, including funding and legislation, is integrated within the ministry responsible for education, while in some countries such as New Zealand and Namibia it is split between Education and Welfare, with curriculum development being under Education. It is obvious that lack of proper policies, funding, and teacher qualification (or experience or both) in most cases hinder effective implementation of early childhood education. An important distinction is to be drawn between the existence of national policies and adherence to them.

In those countries, where the benefits of early childhood education are clearly linked to intellectual development and to a better preparation of the child for formal schooling, the governments, especially the Ministries responsible for education (such as in Sweden and New Zealand), are fully involved in funding early childhood education programmes as well as having the responsibility for teacher qualifications. In countries such as Namibia, South Africa and the United States (with the exception of its Head Start programme) there is a need to rely on funding from the private sector, the local community and parental initiatives. In cases where parents cannot afford fees, affordability becomes a barrier to access to ECD. The government is naturally one of the essential partners in early childhood care and education because this fundamental education becomes one of the mechanisms through which basic political policy is delivered throughout the country. For any early childhood education programme to be successful, there should therefore be a very strong commitment from the government in terms of policy guidance and funding, and close links among education, health and social welfare. Strong links must also be forged and maintained vertically, that is, from the government down through the principal providers such as the civil society and the private sector if the various attempts at coordination for school programmes are to be successful.

This need for coordination must also be arranged within the levels of

government. If early childhood education is to be sustained then the government will have to develop a set of policies that incorporate a number of crucial issues related to children such as the right of the child to education, health, care, protection and well being. The purposeful linking of this set of policies will be one important means through which the government declares its commitment to ensuring that such rights are met.

Although examples of ECD provision have been outlined here from a number of countries, comparisons should always be made with great care because of the cultural, socio-economic and political differences between countries. It will seldom be the case that what is an excellent system in a particular country can be transplanted as a correct solution to another country. The provision of services will always be unique to a region and even differ from place to place in a single country. Nevertheless, the examples given here from different countries should encourage critical reflection and broaden understanding of and encourage the implementation of early childhood education. Finally, it is very important that early childhood education programmes be developed with the view to enhancing the development of cognitive, social and emotional development of children.

CHAPTER 3

INCLUSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of international perspectives on inclusion and inclusive education, specifically within ECD. It looks at inclusive education in a selected number of countries and discusses the implications for educational policy reform to cater for all children with special needs in education. Many countries are faced with having to cope with the challenge of civil wars, poverty and HIV and AIDS (Engelbrecht, 2001; Green, 2001; Muthukrishna, 2001), which is seriously affecting the education system and the development of inclusive education. Other challenges facing an inclusive education system are the increase in number of learners, including learners with special needs, lack of adequate educational resources and inadequately trained teachers, especially in special needs and early childhood education. Over 100 million children, most of them in Sub-Saharan Africa, including Namibia, are still out of school; these include the most vulnerable children in remote areas or those who are at risk because of disabilities (McCormick and Hickson, 1996; UNESCO, 2003). This chapter will consider some important factors that influence the inclusion of learners with special needs in early childhood education centres.

3.2 GENERAL DEVELOPMENTS IN VARIOUS COUNTRIES IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

3.2.1 Inclusive Education in Australia

There are six states and two territories in Australia, each with independent jurisdiction over its own Education Act. Although some similarities have been observed in their Education Acts, there is no specific legislation in Australia that makes provisions for inclusion for learners with special needs in regular classes. However, individual states are now moving towards implementing inclusive policies (Forlin, 1998). An increase has been noticed in the number of learners with special needs attending regular classrooms (Ashman and Elkins, 1994). According to Forlin (1997:23), by 1993 the percentage of learners with disabilities in special schools in Victoria had been reduced by 50%, an indication that over half the number of students with disabilities was included in regular schools. Forlin (1998; 1995) points out that educators in Australia are expected to accept changing policies and practices in an attempt to accommodate all children in their classrooms and meet their educational needs. Forlin further points out that Australian schools are very pro-active in their inclusive approaches. As a result, irrespective of their abilities or disabilities, children are enrolled in schools in their neighbourhood, leaving the prerogative to the school principal to seek the assistance of professionals to provide the special services required for individual children with special needs.

According to a UNESCO Survey on Special Needs Education in a number of selected UNESCO Member States, the review of special education in the State of Victoria, Australia (1984) offered a 'useful focus' of specific principles underlying inclusion and listed them as:

- The right of every child to be educated in a regular school.
- Educational provision to be organized according to student needs rather than according to disability.
- Improved school-based resources and school services.

- Collaborative decision-making.
- All children can learn and be taught.
- Inclusion as a curriculum issue.

Special needs education in Australia is coordinated by the state with a level of decentralisation to regional and school level in some territories. The placement of children with special needs receives varying degrees of support. Some States such as New South Wales, Western Australia and Queensland provide special centres to coordinate services, while others such as the Northern Territories provide visiting advisory services to cater for learners from remote areas. There are no related legal mandates to ensure the rights of learners with special needs in education (Forlin, 1997; Möwes, 2002). For example, the legal mandate for children with special needs in Western Australia relies on the number of children with special needs enrolled in a given school before determining the educational programme in the best interest of the child to be put in place. Similarly, educational provisions for children with special needs 'low-skilled' in New South Wales are determined by the total number of learners enrolled in a given school and according to identified 'needs', resulting in them being perceived as ineffective approaches to inclusion.

Forlin and Forlin (1996:23) warn that the unrelated legal mandates to ensure the rights of children with disabilities in Australia could result in inequalities of education provisions if not being adequately addressed. Fields, (1993) and Forlin, (1998) further observed that concerns were raised about teachers who have not necessarily received sufficient training, but who have implemented inclusion in Australia, which led to a questioning of the effectiveness of the inclusion approach in that country. The situation is further exacerbated with regard to rural teachers who are expected to provide inclusive education without any support services.

3.2.2 Inclusive Education in the United States of America

The term inclusion in the USA can be associated with the civil rights movement when African-Americans were calling for their human rights to be recognised and to be integrated into society (Kochhar, West and Taymans, 2000). People with disabilities in the United States of America were discriminated against in the same way as African Americans were discriminated against as a result of some American laws. People with disabilities and those from minority groups did not benefit from any education and received a substandard education compared to their peers without disabilities. This education was also provided in separate settings in order to ensure that they were not exposed to other children without disabilities. This was particularly the case when they were compared to their peers from white middle class families. In order to do away with such discriminatory practices, the first Act for young children was passed in 1968 called the Handicapped Children's Early Education Act (HCEEA; PL90-538).

This Act was aimed at supporting innovative programmes and parental involvement in early childhood education, especially for children with disabilities and those perceived to be 'at risk' in order to improve their development (Mallorey, 1994). In 1975, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (PL94-142) amended in 1983 to the Individuals with Disabilities Act (PL98-199). The Education for All Handicapped Children Act Amendment (PL99-457), placed emphasis on the provision of education to children with disabilities between the ages of 3 to 21 years old in the least restrictive environment (Mallorey, 1994; McCormick and Hickson, 1996; Kochhar, West and Taymans, 2000). PL99-142 had given individual States the mandate to establish the definition of delays in learning to determine whether the child requires to be identified as having special needs in education or is 'at risk'. Once children have been identified as having special educational needs or at risk, they would be included in the eligible population to benefit from special education services (Mallorey, 1994). Although the Act promoted the maximum participation of children below the age of 3 years in order to address the needs and goals of families, it also had some limitations.

For example, the fact that it did not consider the age of children below the age of 3 years, with the choice left to the prerogative of the individual States, resulted in an uneven distribution of early childhood special education services. As many as 40 States had mandated services between the ages of 5 and 7 years old.

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act was amended in 1990 and 1997 (PL101-476 and PL 105-17, respectively) in order to ensure that all American children with disabilities below the age of 22 benefit from a free public education (Dyson, *et al.*, 1997; Kochar, *et al.*, 2000). While focus was mainly placed on children with disabilities in the school system, the Individuals with Disabilities Act (PL105-17) took cognisance of the fact that there are children with disabilities who are out of school who also needed to benefit from access to education. The Act ensured that out-of-school children were also provided with an education in a least restrictive environment.

Specifically, the Act PL 105-17 called on the State to develop comprehensive services for infants and toddlers (birth to 2 years) and to extend these services to pre-school children (3 to 5 year-olds), recognising the importance of starting early. The Act also recognises the plight of parents who may not be able to afford the education of their child and has therefore called for the provision of free educational services to children with disabilities between the ages of 3 and 5 years. While some Acts considered adults with disabilities and the provision of employment opportunities to those adults, the Individuals Disability Education Act of 1975 was of particular significance because it stressed the provision of a free public education to all children with disabilities from 3 to 21 years old. Provisions for individualised education were made, including parental counselling, therapy, school health services and consultation services.

In cases where children were not benefiting from mainstream education, the Act emphasises that children with special educational needs should receive individualised training, while considering their specific learning needs within a non-restrictive environment with children their age without disabilities. Since the

passing of the Act, many learners with disabilities have been enrolled in American schools and are taught in mainstream education along their peers without special educational needs. It is interesting to note that in the United States of America, some individuals referred to the term inclusion to mean the participation of young children with disabilities and other special needs in education in inclusive settings outside the school system for example, participating in community activities, family events and rituals. Many communities therefore regarded inclusion as the most appropriate and ethical form of education as it meets both the needs of the individual child as well as those of his or her family.

3.2.3 Inclusive Education in ECD in France

France is another country with a well-established and coordinated ECD national structure. Early intervention is taken care of by the government through free medical benefits for children from birth to six years old. The French welfare system coordinates early childhood services for children from birth to 3 years with collaboration from local authorities. The Ministry of Education takes care of children between the ages of 2 to 6 years at the nursery schools referred to as *ecole maternelles*. There are also some private ECD providers in France. However, the majority of the zero to 5 years old are catered for by the *ecole maternelle* (McCormick and Hickson 1996). The main objective of the *ecole maternelles* is to prepare children for school readiness through facilitating the transition between home and school.

In addition to the *ecole maternelle*, children under 3 years may also attend *crèches*, which are government funded. Such funding also includes the services of specialised professionals and ECD educators. The *puericultrice*, for example, is professionally trained as a medical nurse who has specialised in paediatrics. ECD educators received specialised training in various subject areas. It is a national requirement that each *ecole maternelle* has a *puericultrice*, whose salary

is the responsibility of the respective municipality and a trained ECD educator *professeurs des écoles*. In addition to *écoles maternelles* and crèches, ECD is also provided in specialised outpatient clinics where the focus is on the provision of prevention and assessment services for children with suspected disabilities (McCormick and Hickson 1996). Although the provision of early childhood education to children in specialised outpatients clinics is not considered as inclusive education, it is interesting to note that the French government places importance on ensuring education for children with disabilities in special settings.

3.2.4 Inclusive Education in Romania

The right to education in Romania is not a new concept and was already receiving due attention during the 1920s. The 1924 Law on Education of Romania had already given thought to inclusive education. In 1990, Romania ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and was signatory to the Jomtien Declaration of 1990 and the Salamanca Framework for Action in 1994. After the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Government took the liberty to amend national legislation in order to comply with the international convention and to provide more support for inclusive education. Similarly, Article 32 of the Constitution, enacted in 1991 makes the right to education, which is free, diversified, non discriminatory and of good quality for all as a priority (UNESCO, 2001).

Special education in separate settings has been provided within mainstream education and even considers children in foster families or child institutions, children living with HIV and AIDS, or those from ethnic minorities. After the New Constitution, Romania went through a process of restructuring its education system between 1993 and 1995, with funding from the World Bank and the European Union. The Comprehensive Education Reform which followed in November 1996 called for, among other things, the opportunity to enable educational bodies to meet the real needs of society through the development of

new curriculum and qualifications, consultation and improving expertise and undertaking scientific research (UNESCO, 2001:10). Romania boasts the existence of a Childhood Protection Department, created in 1997 specifically to implement the children's rights.

Alternative education is encouraged through various early childhood education programmes such as the Waldorf and Montessori approaches with non-governmental organisations playing an important role in providing early childhood and inclusive education in Romania.

Unlike primary and secondary education, early childhood education is not compulsory in that country. Despite the education reform, of the early 1990s, access to early childhood education has not been encouraging. There has been an increase in the drop out rate in the number of pre-school children, mainly due to the high unemployment rate, especially amongst women and the serious implications of reduced ability to meet school fees.

UNESCO and UNICEF have funded a number of inclusive education projects in that country ranging from the provision of capacity building of pre and in-service teachers, teacher educators in inclusive settings, to projects to support the importance of *including the excluded* (UNICEF, 1996; UNESCO, 2001).

3.2.5 Inclusive Education in South Africa

South Africa experienced similar imbalances in its education system as Namibia due to the Apartheid Era in that country. Blacks were discriminated against in all forms of life, including education, while whites, coloureds and Indians received a better quality of life (Donald, 1996), obviously with whites receiving the best services compared to coloureds and Indians. Education in South Africa was provided along racial lines with black learners receiving an inferior education compared to their white and coloured counterparts. The situation was similar for

children with disabilities and those with other special needs in education. Learners with disabilities and other special needs were educated in separate settings. White, Indian and coloured schools were afforded better-qualified teachers and adequate material resources compared to black schools. On the other hand, black teachers were not adequately qualified and their schools had meagre educational resources. During the Apartheid Era, the education system was characterised by 18 distinct Education Departments. These Departments were divided along racial lines with glaring inequities and inconsistencies experienced across the spectrum as well as non-participatory decision-making, concerning children with special needs, especially with regard to black communities (Donald, 1996). This imbalance in the education system resulted in further imbalances in society and in a large number of black learners leaving school at an earlier age without having obtained any qualifications or adequate life skills. The Department of Education (1997), confirmed the failure of the previous curriculum to respond to the diverse needs of learners which resulted in school drop-outs and failures:

Specialised education and support has predominantly been provided for a small percentage of learners with disabilities within 'special' schools and classes. Most learners with disabilities have either fallen outside the system or been 'mainstreamed by default.

Since the election of the new South African government in 1994, the Department of Education has been committed to redressing these educational imbalances and transforming the education system into a unitary non-racial one. They are equally committed to amending education policy and legislation to be in line with international standards based on principles of human rights and equity (Engelbrecht, 2004; Engelbrecht, Swart and Eloff, 2001; Lomofsky and Lazarus, 2001; UNESCO, 2002).

The South African Constitution makes clear reference to basic human rights as well as access to quality education for all in that country and calls for fundamental rights to dignity and equality for all people. The South African

School Act (1996) also refers to the provision of equal access to quality basic education through the creation of a single inclusive education system in that country. This is clearly reflected in Act 27 of 1996 as follows:

the advancement and protection of fundamental rights of every person in particular the right of every person to be protected against unfair discrimination within or by an education department or education institution on any ground whatsoever; (the right) of every person to basic education and equal access to education institutions.

In South Africa, inclusive education has gained ground both at school as well as at community level. It goes beyond the idea of educating learners with disabilities. It addresses education from the perspective of restoring the human rights of all marginalised groups and tackling the barriers to learning and development which children are faced with, regardless of aspects such as race, colour, religion and language (Dyson and Forlin, 1999; Education White Paper 6: 2001; Forlin and Engelbrecht, 1998; Swart, Engelbrecht, Eloff, Pettipher and Oswald, 2004; Lomofsky and Lazarus, 2001; Waghid and Engelbrecht, 2002).

Furthermore, inclusive education in the South African context does not only make provision for children who are normally termed "disabled", but also caters for those children who are not accommodated in the education system. These include street children, school dropouts, school failures and all the young people who have not benefited from basic education in the past (Csapo, 1996; Education White Paper 6: 2001; Forlin and Engelbrecht, 1998). Special needs also refer to those children who suffer as a result of violence, HIV and AIDS, ineffective developmental transitions and commercial exploitation (Engelbrecht, 2004; Muthukrishna, 2002).

To ensure the effective implementation of an inclusive approach in South Africa, the Education White Paper 6 followed up the recommendations on Special Needs Education (2001). These recommendations outline key strategies and

guidelines on how South Africa can develop its inclusive education programme to meet a diverse range of learning needs, moving away from the traditional child-deficit, medical approach towards an ecological and multi-level systems approach (Engelbrecht, 2004).

The Department of Education describes inclusive education within a systemic and developmental approach and calls for the development of support teams at all levels (Engelbrecht, 2004). In recognising the different types of learning needs that may be experienced by learners facing barriers to learning and development, the Department of Education proposes the revision of existing policies and legislation in education as well as possible interventions to be adopted to contribute towards an effective teaching and learning process. A period of 20 years has been proposed for the implementation of the inclusive education training system in South Africa, with the first stage of implementation from 2001 to 2003; medium-term implementation will take place in the period from 2004 to 2008; and the long-term implementation will occur between 2009 and 2021 (Education White Paper 6: 2001). The major activities to be implemented during those phases include:

- Wider advocacy.
- Funding.
- Institutional capacity building through education and training.
- The provision of infrastructure.

In addition, Education White Paper 6 makes provision for inclusive education in the formal education system as well as for out-of-school children and youth, and points out that collaboration will be strengthened with the Ministries of Health and Social Development to design and implement early identification, assessment and education programmes for children with disabilities between the ages of 0 and 9 years. Strengthening education support services is also viewed as one of the main keys in reducing barriers to learning.

Teachers' qualifications are also considered as crucial to the quality of services

rendered. The Interim Policy on Child Development developed in 1994 calls for early childhood educators to receive the necessary training in ECD. The policy advocates aims firstly to introduce a single curriculum framework for children. Secondly, to establish an accreditation system to recognise the qualifications and experience of those who have not formally trained as early childhood education and care providers, within the framework of the new National Qualifications Framework for all education and training under the South African Qualifications Authority. The introduction of the outcomes-based-approach was also perceived as a core educational practice within inclusive education in responding to learner diversity (Muthukrishna, 2000; UNESCO, 2002). A curriculum review was undertaken with a view to implementing an outcomes-based approach focusing on the development of the various skills, attitudes and knowledge of learners on the basis of which their achievements could be determined.

Accordingly, White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education and Training proposes some recommendations on the provisions of inclusive education in South Africa. It recommends the transformation of the education system into fully inclusive schools, establishment of support services as well as the recognition of the rights of parents, learners and educators within a system that will reduce barriers to learning at all levels of the system. It focuses on identifying and addressing barriers to learning, development and participation other than on learners' special needs. It further reflects the weaknesses of the present education system of South Africa that does not cater for the needs of all children experiencing barriers to education and learning (Waghid and Engelbrecht, 2002). The White Paper certainly provides a vision for inclusive education in South Africa. It has short-, medium-and long-term goals. While the short- and medium-term goals aim at addressing the shortcomings of the current education system, expanding access for children and young people with disabilities and revising the policy and legislation, the long-term goals aim at establishing a fully inclusive education and training system that is responsive to the diverse needs of all learners in South Africa.

Policy development itself is neither sufficient for successful inclusion, nor does it adequately address the needs of all learners experiencing barriers to learning (Waghid and Engelbrecht, 2002). There should be continuous policy dialogue on inclusive education, and participation in the development of inclusive approaches that should be followed by implementation, not merely at school level but at all levels from the central level, district level to the classroom. The role of the teachers and learners, attitudes towards inclusion and learners with special needs, as well as the support services offered for the implementation, will have an impact on the implementation of an inclusive approach. Engelbrecht (2004) stresses the important role of educational psychologists in the new South Africa and calls for their participation in inclusive education. She points to the importance of changing the traditional roles of psychologists to thinking about barriers to learning and using their unique skills and knowledge to respond to the diverse educational needs of individual learners. In this way they could enhance learning and development and facilitate the establishment of health promoting and inclusive schools in South Africa.

Although it is clear that the inclusive education philosophy in South Africa is aimed at redressing the imbalances and inequalities caused by the Apartheid System in that country, a number of barriers still exist to addressing inclusion in South Africa. Even if these imbalances were eliminated, there would be challenges remaining for proper inclusion issues. These barriers are very complex. Even though there are a variety of inclusive approaches being promoted, the quality of teaching and the social interactions may be contrary to the practices advocated. For example, a child with a special need in education may not necessarily receive the special training required for such a child; the attitudes of some teachers, especially in 'mainstream' predominantly white education settings will also have to change in order to make inclusive education.

The Department of Education (1997) reported that a number of children with disabilities are still excluded from education, as many centres are still physically inaccessible in particular to learners with physical disabilities. In order to create

an environment where all children learn, it is important to ensure that all children feel that they belong to the group and are part of the learning community.

Although research indicates that the demand for inclusive education has been growing in South Africa since 1994, some challenges are phased with regard to the quality of provisions for inclusive education. Among these challenges are the lack of properly trained inclusive education teachers, the lack of knowledge and skills to deal with diversity amongst learners and to identify and assess individual learner needs (Engelbrecht, *et al.*, 2001) and the lowering of the general standards of education.

In a small scale study undertaken by Engelbrecht, *et al.* (2001) it was revealed that although more children with special needs in education are included into mainstream classrooms in South African schools, teachers have limited or no experience and knowledge of inclusive education. It becomes, therefore, of critical importance to provide appropriate training methods for teachers that specifically focus on supporting the diverse needs of individual learners as well as all the necessary support services for teachers and learners (Engelbrecht, *et al.*, 1998; Engelbrecht, *et al.*, 2001). Similarly, as indicated by Donald, (1996); Engelbrecht, Forlin, Eloff and Swart (2001), the development of an inclusive education system in South Africa will certainly require the development of proper support services at both the provincial, district and school levels adopting a systems approach and an ecological conceptualisation of learning in which the services of all relevant stakeholders are utilised.

Inadequate financial and human resources certainly contribute to the inadequate implementation of educational programmes at school level as well as follow-up programmes at home. In cases where early childhood educators are not adequately trained in inclusive education approaches to be able to respond to the diverse needs of the learners, there is a need to develop strategies and programmes that address the situation in a holistic manner, especially in black and rural remote schools in the country (Engelbrecht, Forlin, Eloff and Swart, 2001).

Education White Paper 6 recognises the importance of capacity building and professional development as well as programmes that will focus on the effective leadership in policy, administration and programme implementation. It also calls for the establishment of proper information management systems, and the development of skills and competencies required for addressing severe learning difficulties at all levels of the education system at both national and provincial levels. In order to build such capacities, it is essential to provide quality in-service and pre-service education programmes to all professionals in the education system, including early childhood educators.

A new South Africa, therefore, calls for the restructuring of the entire education system and calls for the participation of parents, politicians, the wider community, private sector and the development partners in building a true inclusive education system for South Africa. As stated in the Education White Paper 6, the new South African Education system equally calls for a systemic approach to education in which the needs of all learners are considered and addressed.

3.2.6 Inclusive Education in Zambia

Zambia is a signatory to the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action and has adopted an inclusive approach towards learners with special needs in education. The Government has committed itself to providing education for all children irrespective of their cultural or social background, gender or ability. The 1996 National Policy on Education calls for the integration of learners with special needs into mainstream education (UNESCO, 1999). It also focuses on the Government's broader mission to improve access and quality special educational needs in mainstream education and to develop modalities for the provision of inclusive early childhood care and development education.

Although inclusive education policy regulations are in place in Zambia, learners with special needs are taught in special schools and special classes, with support

services extended to families and communities with learners with special needs. For example, home based care services are provided to families of children that may require additional support services.

Professionals such as therapists, teachers and community members are equally involved in providing services to children with special needs while regular counselling services are extended to parents with children with special educational needs. Teachers are required to organise home-based care for children with special needs while paraprofessionals, teachers and community members are also expected to participate in guiding children faced with barriers to learning.

While inclusive education is thus not fully implemented in schools in Zambia, mechanisms have been put in place to promote and monitor the development of an inclusive schooling (UNESCO, 1999). The Ministry has developed some requirements to be met for inclusive education (Kaoma, 2004):

- Adapting infrastructure to suit learners with special needs.
- Promoting friendly attitudes towards learners with special needs.
- Monitoring strategies to assess progress and obstacles being faced.
- Ensuring collaboration with line ministries.
- Putting in place specialised staff.
- Preparing communities for inclusion, including parents and children.
- Establishing a database for learners with special needs.
- Putting in place support services to identify, assess and refer learners with special needs.

In order to assist the Government in attaining its education goals, a UNESCO funded inclusive education pilot programme in three schools has built up the capacity of teachers in those schools to be able to identify and provide the necessary support services to learners with special needs. The project has also sensitised communities to the importance of inclusive education.

Programmes at the teacher training colleges are required to train student teachers in aspects of inclusive education in order to allow a smooth inclusive education process at the school level.

3.3 FACTORS INFLUENCING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

3.3.1 Government Support for Inclusive Policies

To ensure the sustainability of early childhood education programmes, there is a need to develop clearly defined policies in support of early childhood education. Zimba, *et al.*, (1999:77), confirm that inclusive education requires a well-defined legal framework and consistent policies. Evans, Myers and Ilfeld, (2000) argue that both national (communities and churches) and international forces (conferences and conventions and donor influence) can influence policies. They further maintain that policy development does not need to be a top-down approach but would be better as a collective process in which all stakeholders, especially the ones interacting with children on a daily basis, are fully involved. Such policies should emphasise the role that each partner can play in contributing to the implementation of a coherent inclusive policy that takes into account the new approaches of early childhood education in an inclusive context.

Inclusive education and early childhood education and development in many countries fall under the coordination or responsibility of two or more sectors: under health, social services and education. Responsibilities are also extended to non-governmental and civil society organizations and the private sector. Clear policies and legal frameworks are crucial in determining the extent to which these stakeholders coordinate early childhood education, and the extent to which they allocate resources fairly and in advocating for coherent policy implementation (responsibility for maintaining the building, water and electricity, safety and health codes, educational materials and outdoor facilities) (Gallagher, *et al.*, 1999). The

coordination of inclusive early childhood education policy implementation is thus critical in ensuring that resources are well planned and utilised to promote the child's holistic development.

Regulations pertaining to inclusive early childhood education should display clear information on the provision of learning opportunities which must be created for these special children through proper planning, implementation, monitoring and through evaluating a wider than normal range of activities to facilitate learning and development. Although Ainscow (1998) and Engelbrecht and Forlin (1997) support the inclusive education approach, they caution that the degree of inclusion that can be effected depends on the policies as well as on financial and other political factors in a given country, school and community.

Early childhood education providers cannot succeed by themselves to ensure an inclusive quality early childhood education if policies are not adequately implemented, children themselves are not involved in the process of teaching and learning and parents and communities are not involved in the decision making processes including monitoring and evaluating the programmes in place.

3.3.2 Resources

There is no education system that does not need financial and human resources in order to implement its programmes. Resources are part of policy issues that need to be considered in implementing an inclusive approach in early childhood education. Many countries are signatories to the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (UNESCO, 1994). They have committed themselves to giving the highest policy and budgetary priority to improve their educational systems to enable them to include all children regardless of individual differences. However, it is heartening to note that many countries have failed to honour the Salamanca commitment and to ensure political commitment and proper budgetary provisions for inclusive education (UNESCO, 1999; 2000).

Special educational needs do not seem to be amongst the priorities of many countries' policies and expenditures; reasons for this may vary as the number of countries. However, one may assume that policy makers have not adequately grasped neither the need for proper legislation nor a full understanding and appreciation of special needs in education.

As in many countries that have committed themselves to the Salamanca Framework for Action, it is clear that early childhood education in Namibia does not necessarily benefit from adequate financial and human resources from the Government (World Bank, 2004). This hinders effective implementation of a coherent inclusive ECD approach in the country. Evidence clearly suggests (Evans, Myers and Ilfeld, 2000; Wilson, 1998) that lack of adequate resources and facilities is a major barrier to the implementation of effective inclusive education in many countries.

Very few inclusive educational facilities are found in urban schools. The situation in rural areas is worse. Here children have to remain at home because such facilities are virtually non-existent in rural areas (Kisanji (1993). Where they do exist, even in urban areas, they are inadequate. For instance, there are neither adequately trained personnel nor sufficient support services for regular school teachers to achieve optimal teaching in inclusive settings. In sum, lack of adequate facilities, absence of support services, large class sizes and poor infrastructure are some of the barriers in inclusive education (Lomofsky, Roberts and Mvambi, 1999).

The examples provided above make it clear that in some countries early childhood education receives funding from the Government or State and municipalities while in others, it is solely the responsibility of communities or parents. Many of the early childhood education programmes in Namibia are at present run by non-governmental organisations, churches, communities and individuals. Some of these programmes may not be sustainable.

Those countries with clear policy guidelines on funding early childhood education seem to be making adequate provision for early childhood education compared to those that mainly depend on parents and communities. The same implications will apply to the issue of training of ECD educators.

3.3.3 Curriculum

In order to ensure that Namibia attains EFA Goal 1 by 2015, it is crucial to reform the early childhood education curriculum in order to ensure the adoption of a holistic integrated approach to inclusive early childhood education. It is important to point out that there are no common standards concerning quality in early childhood education. The challenge becomes more complex when one considers that the roles and responsibilities with regard to policy implementation and administrative functions of the two Ministries responsible for education and child welfare are not clearly demarcated. This has a negative impact on the quality of curriculum implementation at the level of the ECD centres. Quality may also be affected by factors such as the values and beliefs of teachers and communities in which early childhood education takes place. Variables such as qualifications of educators, teacher attitudes towards learners with special needs, the psychological and physical environment (Lomofsky, Roberts and Mvambi, 1999) class size and resources must, therefore also be considered. Quality can also be determined by the way in which the ECD centre collaborates with the community, parents and any other stakeholders with an interest in early childhood development.

The contents of an inclusive curriculum influence the outcomes of the child's learning either positively or negatively. Although the draft ECD curriculum in place for Namibia provides guidelines for implementing special needs in education in Namibia, it is not clear as to how special needs education is to match the developmental levels and needs of children, especially in light of the limited teaching experience and inadequate qualifications of the ECD educators.

The successful implementation of the curriculum also depends on the teaching approaches and methodologies applied in the classroom. A teacher-centred approach may not be as successful as a learner-centred approach with extensive use of play as a strategy in an inclusive early childhood education setting. Teaching methods, style, curriculum content, classroom organisation and learning materials all have an impact on curriculum implementation (Bredenkamp, Knuth, Kunesh and Shulman, 1992; Eloff, 2001; Kochhar, West and Taymans, 2000; Lerner, 1993; Lomofsky, Roberts and Mvambi, 1999).

Parental participation in early childhood education has also been emphasised as an important factor, especially for children experiencing barriers to education and learning. The curriculum content should therefore be developed in collaboration with parents and take into account the needs of society. Concern has been raised about the formal education curriculum which is regarded as not producing secondary school graduates with the necessary skills to be able to cope in any subject area, especially in the languages, natural, physical and social sciences at the tertiary institution level (Republic of Namibia, 2004; World Bank, 2004). It is therefore important to ensure that the curriculum, both at the ECD level as well as the formal education level, is developed with the needs of society and current developmental needs into account so these children attain the proposed learning outcomes at the end of their basic learning experiences. An ECD curriculum should subsequently be as wide as possible, in order to cater for the needs and levels of all children in a given context. It should also be closely linked to the needs of all the learners, taking into account their cultural specificities, while providing extra support to children experiencing barriers to learning. It should provide opportunities for children to work in groups as well as for them to work individually at their pace of learning and development.

A developmental appropriate inclusive ECD curriculum should thus consider the following elements:

Content

- Individual characteristics of children.
- Child development knowledge.
- Knowledge base of various disciplines.
- Cultural values.
- Support for childcare from the community.
- Coordinated information system about the child.
- Providers who are knowledgeable about community resources.
- Access to specialists/consultants to obtain help with special issues.
- Learning opportunities where children can become aware of alternatives.
- Children are given the opportunity for self-evaluation.
- Promote activities for children to think about consequences.
- Opportunities for children to explore new things.
- Facilitated activities to help children to recognise cause and effect.
- Continuity between home and child care environment facilitated by frequent formal and informal opportunities for providers and families to exchange information about philosophy, policies, operations, plans and changes.
- Attention to the consumers' role in identifying and understanding child development and child care quality, and
- The inclusion of families and professionals (from outside the child care setting) in programme evaluation.

Structure – Environment

- A spacious, comfortable, varied, attractive, stimulating environment for children, with well defined activity centres and playgrounds that have accessible age-appropriate materials available to promote cognitive, language, social- emotional, self-help and physical growth.
- Low child-to-staff ratios, and small group sizes.
- Activities which help children to become aware of spatial orientation (underneath, on top, over, inside, outside)

Structure-Administration

- Adherence to high regulatory standards set and enforced by the state licensing agencies.
- Policy making.
- Good record keeping.
- Regular planning that involves Heads of the centres, staff, families and communities.
- Monitoring and evaluation of the outcomes of teaching and learning.

Operations

- Frequent, positive interactions between staff and children (caregivers engaged in activities with children).
- A balanced schedule of individual and group, indoor and outdoor, child and adult-initiated activities that stimulate cognitive, language, social-emotional, self-help, and physical growth that are developmentally appropriate in terms of their pattern, content, and use of equipment and materials, including media.
- Modifications for children with special needs.
- Flexibility and smooth transitions.
- Curriculum that promote continuity between home and the child care environment, and
- Written policy making that describes the philosophy and goals that guide operations.

Personnel

- Educated staff – with levels of education commensurate with levels of responsibility.
- Trained staff-high levels of specialised training in early childhood in order for staff to be able to construct activities and interact appropriately with children.
- ECD Centre managers with strong leadership qualities, skills, and experience in programme administration.

- Staff with personal qualities of warmth and care giving, including ability to interact positively with children; be available, responsive, and respectful; encourage independence; set clear rules and limits; expect and allow appropriate social behaviour.
- “Internationality” – commitment to the field of early childhood.
- Staff development plans that begin with orientation and continue with regular training opportunities to improve skills for working with children and families.
- Adequate numbers of staff members (ratio and group sizes) to allow staff to interact.
- Accurate record keeping relative to personnel, and
- Low staff turnover and administrative ability
(Bredenkamp, Knuth, Kunesh and Shulman, 1992; Eloff, 2001; Gallagher, Rooney and Campbell, 1999:318-819).

3.3.4 Teacher Education

An effective early childhood education system needs well-qualified and experienced teachers in ECD as well as in inclusive education. However, as indicated in a number of reports on early childhood education in Africa in general (Kisanji, 1993) and in Namibia in particular (World Bank, 2004), there are inadequate teacher training programmes for early childhood educators. As a result, educators do not have adequate qualifications in ECD, or in special needs education. One can only assume that a lack of interest in early childhood education is because it is neither considered part of the formal education system nor as a profession. Lack of interest in early childhood education has thus meant that secondary school dropouts teach in ECD centres. This lack of training in ECD can therefore result in challenges in achieving inclusion in early childhood education.

The Draft ECD Curriculum of Namibia (MBESC, 2004) stipulates that the

minimum qualifications for a person to be trained as an ECD educator is a Grade 10 Certificate or five years experience. Capacity building of any teacher in any country is very important if a country is seriously considering developing its human resources. An inclusive approach to early childhood education in Namibia will not be successfully implemented if the training of ECD educators is not judged as very important. The current provisions of 12 weeks training in ECD should be changed so that early childhood education is provided at degree or diploma level for a longer period of time in order to prepare ECD educators in both approaches and methodologies of teaching in inclusive early childhood settings. In-service teacher education should become an integral part of the ECD programme so that teachers receive continuous training in all aspects of early childhood education as well as inclusive education approaches. Such training should be able to assist the ECD educators in the identification, referral and possible early interventions for children with special needs in ECD.

Improving the teaching skills of the ECD educators would thus require that necessary resources be allocated to institutional in-service education programmes so that all ECD educators benefit from such training.

3.3.5 The Teacher–Learner Ratio

The importance of the learning environment in promoting learning and development has been discussed in Chapter 2. The child teacher ratio is a very important policy issue that must not be overlooked in developing an inclusive early childhood education policy. Gallagher *et al* (1999) provide what they consider as optimal teacher-child ratios as: 1:4 for infants; 1:6 for toddlers; 1:8 for 3-year-olds; 1: 10 for 4-year-olds. The highest teacher-child ratio in Britain is recommended at 1:3 for children under three, while in France the teacher-child ratio for infants is 1:5 and 1:8 for children under 3-years old. Teacher-child ratio in New Zealand range from 1:5 for children under two-years old; 1:6 for children between 2 and 5 years old and 2:7-20 children and 3:21-30 children, while there

are local variations in Sweden with teacher-child ratios varying from 1:3-5 for children under three; and from 2 to 3.5:18-20 children between 3 and 6 years old (Moss, 2000). Clear policies in early childhood should, therefore consider what is the ideal teacher-child ratio in order to assure an effective inclusive teaching. There are no data available for teacher learner ratio in ECD in Namibia. However, the average teacher learner ratio in primary education in Namibian schools is 1:29 (World Bank, 2004).

It is almost impossible to expect an early childhood educator, especially an untrained one, to teach a classroom of 30 to 40 children and attain the same results as one teacher with 15 children in an inclusive setting. The researcher believes that an inclusive ECD classroom should have a teacher/learner ration of 1:15. A smaller classroom provides the teacher with better opportunities and the flexibility to cater for the individual needs of all the learners. Not much attention has been paid to this aspect of providing support to teachers in classrooms, let alone in inclusive settings (Möwes, 2002). Ideally, in a situation where both human and financial resources are available, specialised personnel such as psychologists and speech and language therapist, on a part time or full time basis, should support such a teacher in implementing an inclusive curriculum to ensure effective learning. Möwes (2002:66), explains that such collaboration can contribute to an effective inclusion approach in the classroom:

Staff working cooperatively with other colleagues and ancillaries such as educators' aides, classroom assistants and special needs assistants, can have a considerable bearing on the rate of development and the successful inclusion of learners for whom it is provided.

Given the context of early childhood education in Namibia, it is evident that there is an urgent need for a paradigm shift in order to address all issues related to implementing an inclusive approach in ECD. Such a paradigm shift will call for more trained personnel in the various aspects of special needs such as educational psychologists, speech and language therapists, counsellors,

audiologists to be specifically trained for classroom environments. It should also call for the improvement of skills of all ECD educators in the country. Teacher assistants should be considered because they play a very important role in providing the necessary support to the teacher while the teacher deals with specific special needs of individual children in the classroom.

3.3.6 The Role of the Educator

3.3.6.1 Educators' Attitudes towards Inclusive Education

The most important and critical person in a child's learning after the parents at home is the teacher on whom a child's learning outcome depends. Teachers, through their education and training, have been prepared to understand how children learn and to cope with the learning needs of all children in specific learning contexts. Teachers' values and attitudes play a very important role in a child's learning experience (Winzer, 1998). The roles and responsibilities of teachers will thus have to change if they are to adapt to the fundamental transformations facing society today and to respond to these new demands in education.

Beliefs and attitudes of a teacher are crucial to a successful implementation of an inclusive approach in any given context (Forlin, 1995; Scruggs and Mastropieri, 2000; Winzer, 1998 and Zimba, *et al.*, 1999). Teachers' beliefs and attitudes have an effect on what they teach and how they impart knowledge to children (Bricker, 2000). A successful inclusive programme depends on the positive attitudes of the teacher as far as the special needs of children are concerned. It is important for a teacher to have an understanding about the whole philosophy of inclusion and to be prepared to deal with the daily challenges that may come with such a philosophy.

Some teachers, although sympathetic to the educational needs of children who

experience barriers in education, have some misconceptions about special needs in education. Forlin (1995) reports a study undertaken by Firestone and Pennell (1993), in which there was a strong correlation between the teachers' commitment towards inclusive education and other beliefs. The study revealed that teachers who were fully committed to serving children with special needs participated fully in decision-making processes, and they showed greater collaboration amongst themselves and with school administrators. It is worth saying that such positive attitudes amongst staff led to better job satisfaction.

Research indicates that there are different views with regard to the inclusion of children with special educational needs in mainstream schools. Whereas some educators have positive attitudes to special needs and inclusive education, others have negative perceptions about the notion of inclusive education. Teachers' attitudes to inclusion are influenced by a number of factors. These include the nature of the disability, their experience of working with children with special needs and their qualifications, attitudes towards disability, lack of clear policy guidelines and support services at the school as well as lack of confidence (Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden, 2000; Forlin, Douglas, Hattie, 1996; Möwes, 2002; Waldron, Mcleskey and Pacchianno, 1990; Zimba, *et al.*, 2002).

Teachers in favour of inclusive education revealed that it contributed towards them adopting flexible teaching methodologies to cater for the needs of individual children. The Namibian study, undertaken by Zimba, *et al.* (2002), revealed that 65% of teachers indicated that an inclusive education approach would compel them to adapt their teaching methods and to be more flexible in teaching. Another 65% acknowledged that having learners with special needs in education in their classroom has contributed to their being more efficient in organizing their school programme. Another vote of 63,8% have become more aware of the need to cater for the needs of children with special needs in education (Zimba, *et al.*, 2002:26). Similarly in Colorado, U.S.A., 70% of the respondents in a study on teachers' attitudes confirmed that inclusive education was successful (Winzer, 1998:234). On the other hand, a study undertaken by Semmel, *et al.* (1991) in

California and Illinois revealed that only 18% of the teachers agreed to full-time inclusion for students with mild disabilities in regular classrooms. Similarly, teachers from New York and Massachusetts were against the idea of phasing out special schools and contended that regular teachers would not be willing accept students with special needs in their classroom. Another study reported in Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden, 2000, on mainstream and special education teachers' perceptions indicated that some teachers in the study who had strong feelings against inclusion due to large classroom sizes, lack of adequate resources, lack of adequate teacher preparation and to benefit all students, blamed the decision makers for being out of touch with classroom realities. Whereas, those teachers who were well prepared for inclusion were fully committed to inclusion in their schools.

The question to ask is why are teachers so reluctant to accept children with special needs in their classrooms? Reasons given against inclusive education range from slowing down the pace of teaching and learning, lowering the standards of education and placing more pressure on the teacher making the teaching profession less enjoyable and more stressful (Engelbrecht, Swart and Eloff, 2000). In general, those who were not happy had no experience in working with inclusive classrooms while those who were happy had experienced working in inclusive environments and had received training in the subject area. This is in line with Lomosfksy, *et al.* (1999), who contend that those teachers with limited experience of people with disabilities have negative attitudes towards inclusion.

Teachers' attitudes towards inclusion also vary in Australia. In a study undertaken by Forlin (1998), in Queensland, Australia, it was revealed that some teachers were in general favourable of inclusion because it provides opportunities for learners to understand and appreciate people with disabilities and to avoid any prejudice. However, another study, revealed that although teachers were in general positive about the policy of inclusion, they were only positive about mainstreaming children with mild physical disabilities who required little additional support (Forlin, Douglas and Hattie, 1996).

Research undertaken in Namibia (Zimba, *et al.*, 2002) also revealed that teaching in inclusive classrooms allows the teachers to look at learners as individuals and increase the need to provide individualised teaching. Some believe that inclusive education has demands with negative consequences on the quality of teaching. The same study further revealed that most teachers have the perception that having learners with special needs in the classrooms impacts negatively on the learning environment. A majority (82%) felt that children with special needs in education slowed down the speed at which teachers were expected to implement the curriculum. Such teachers did not expect their learners with special needs to perform well in the classroom. Teachers in Zimbabwe were firmly against inclusion. Their intolerance is reflected in their refusal to accept children with disabilities in their classrooms. Forlin, Douglas and Hattie (1996), reported on a study undertaken by Barnartt and Kabzems (1992) which revealed that 40% of teachers in Zimbabwe indicated that they would refuse to accept a student with an intellectual disability in their classrooms.

Teachers in Canada in a study undertaken by the Alberta Teachers Association expressed similar sentiments about inclusive education. The study revealed that although teachers generally accepted the principle of inclusive education, they expressed concern about the approach not fully working, while others expressed their fears about the disruptive behaviours or high demand for attention from children with special educational needs (Winzer, 1998:234).

Attitudes towards an inclusive education approach also varied amongst learners. Some learners were found not to be cooperative with learners with special educational needs. In the same study undertaken by Forlin (*ibid*) it was also revealed that younger children were easier to integrate in inclusive settings than older children where the expectations of academic performance are less formally structured'. Whereas a study undertaken in the United Kingdom on teachers' attitudes towards integration revealed that preschool teachers were more enthusiastic about their children with special needs in education (Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden, 2000). A study in the United States of America revealed

that teacher perceptions about inclusion varied. Inclusion in some cases was taking place only at the level of particular classrooms. In other cases, it was initiated by the school principal and tended to benefit only certain teachers within a school. In addition, some Directors advocated inclusion at the district level (Lieber, Hanson, Beckman, Odom, Sandall, Schwartz, Horn and Wolery, 2000). Gallagher (1997) undertook a study amongst preschool teachers' views about their changing needs and responsibilities during their first years as community-based consulting teachers in the United States of America. In her findings, she indicated the positive attitudes of these teachers towards inclusion in preschool community education. Although there were those that had shared their frustration with administrative procedures (paper work, logistics, referrals, staffing), the majority felt that inclusion was being successfully implemented with the support of the communities. These findings suggest the need for inclusive education to start at the level of early childhood education so that by the time children enter formal education, they are already accustomed to playing and socialising with their peers with special educational needs, and accept them as individuals with the same rights who deserve the same respect. These children will thus become supportive of their peers with special needs.

In light of this finding, schools can thus both hinder or promote inclusive education. It can be a barrier to inclusive education if the whole school environment is not responsive to the needs of individual learners, especially those with special needs. It can be supportive of inclusive education if both the physical and psychological environment, including the curriculum, teachers' attitudes and classroom management are sensitive to the needs of all learners (Lazarus, *et al.*, 1999, Pivik McComas and Laflame, 2002). The principal resource required for inclusive approaches, besides the teacher's attitude and commitment, is time, energy, well trained personnel, who would be in a better position to monitor the children's activity and academic achievements and provide the required guidance and leadership (Dyson and Forlin, 1999; Waldron, Mcleskey and Pacchianno, 1990).

Having identified some of the issues for and against inclusive education, it becomes very clear that teachers' attitudes may have both a negative as well as a positive impact on inclusive education. In order to ensure that teachers adopt positive attitudes to children experiencing barriers to education, it is important to develop teacher-training courses, which specifically focus on all aspects of inclusive education during in-service and pre-service training programs (Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden, 2000; Engelbrecht, Swart and Eloff, 2000; Engelbrecht, 2001).

3.3.6.2 Pre-service and In-service Teacher Education

A successful inclusive approach depends on the level of training of the teachers as well as on the provision of other crucial resources (Bricker, 2000). Teachers in early childhood education deal with very young children, who are still in the process of development. These teachers should have the adequate skills and competencies to assist the children to develop their potential. Inclusive ECD should call for the training and re-training of teachers so that they can cope with the new demands and roles in education. Research indicates that few teacher-training programmes focus on preparing student teachers in inclusive education approaches, especially in early childhood education. In the United States of America, for example, fewer than 5% of mainstream teachers have been formally prepared to teach in inclusive settings (Winzer, 1998). Preparing teachers for inclusive early childhood should be promoted in the same manner that teachers are prepared for formal basic education. Winzer pointed to the need to pay careful attention to teacher education in order to emphasise professionalism and greater teacher flexibility in an inclusive context. It is not good enough to take a practising teacher from school for just one week, for example, and to teach him or her how to teach in an inclusive classroom. It requires a continual process of new education orientations for portions of several years in order to develop appropriate teaching skills and methodologies in the teachers.

An in-depth training programme on inclusive education should be developed and the teachers provided with all the necessary skills and techniques on inclusive education. In addition, follow-up assistance should be extended to such a teacher in the classroom setting. One of the fundamental reasons why full inclusive education is not completely successful in some educational settings is the inadequate training of teachers to enable them to provide meaningful teaching to learners with disabilities or special needs in education (Scruggs and Mastropieri, 2000; Engelbrecht, Swart and Eloff, 2000). Due to their lack of skills and experience in dealing with learners with special needs in education, these teachers naturally lack confidence about their performance in coping in the classroom. Hence, the need to prepare teachers at the pre-service education level for inclusive education approaches.

Teachers are nowadays faced with a number of challenges ranging from their having to cope with learner diversity, large or overcrowded classrooms, the lack of teaching and learning resources, having to face issues of HIV and AIDS orphans, to having to deal with management challenges. While teachers are expected to follow the curriculum, and to prepare children for assessments, any innovation and flexibility that is demanded of teachers often becomes a challenge. While the interest and motivation may be there, it becomes a complex challenge for the teacher to be able to provide individual attention to children with special needs in education in the classroom. Winzer's (1998) thoughts are most relevant to this discussion. She points out that any change in the school system has an impact of the teachers' methods of teaching. Teachers in an inclusive classroom setting should be prepared to go beyond their traditional roles of teaching in order to cope with the new demands of having to look after the intellectual development of children in an inclusive classroom.

While emphasising the importance of teacher education, it is equally important to understand the challenges and barriers that early childhood educators may face in inclusive settings in order to provide them with the necessary skills and capacity to be able to cope with such challenges. In addition, it is important to

articulate what we aim to achieve for each child in inclusive settings. Udell, Peters and Templeman (1998), having grappled with the issue of desirable outcomes, raise critical questions we should ask ourselves when developing an inclusive approach for early childhood education:

- What are desirable outcomes for all children participating in the inclusive programme?
- Are desirable outcomes reasonable outcomes?
- Who should decide these outcomes?
- Are short-term gains as important as long-term gains?
- Are we sacrificing academic goals for social goals?

One of the most challenging factors in early childhood education is that of the teacher having been prepared to accept the concept of the teacher as *facilitator* of learning rather than the *director*. The teacher should thus take on the role of facilitator in the teaching and learning process and guide the children individually through their learning (Giangreco, Baumgart and Doyle, 1995, Hilderbrand, 1997; Miller, 1995). An early childhood educator should possess the qualities of being a resource, organiser, a keen observer and an excellent manager and must believe in the importance of his or her job and see it as a means of contributing to a child's learning and life.

Teachers working with children with special educational needs should receive training in order to understand and appreciate the needs of special children and to adapt their teaching methodologies to cater for the needs of all children. In addition, their training should develop their ability to identify and support children with special educational needs (Csapo, 1996; Engelbrecht, Swart and Eloff, 2001; Miller, 1995, Pivik, McComas and Laflamme, 2002 ; Zimba, *et al.*, 2002).

Furthermore, an expert teacher receives knowledge during the pre-service training and is able to deviate from that trained knowledge and experience to develop effective strategies to fit in any new teaching and learning environment. The role of the teacher should thus be to create opportunities for optimal learning

and to stretch the learners' creative thinking skills to become independent learners and thinkers (Lesar, Benner, Habel and Coleman, 1997). Only once we have created such conditions for children with special needs, can we start to talk about access, equity, democracy and education for all.

Equally important is the aspect of research on early childhood education, which has been neglected in Namibia. Teachers should be encouraged to undertake research on issues related to early childhood and inclusive education. Such research will contribute to professional knowledge of the teacher while at the same time providing information on how to address challenges that may face teachers as well as children with special needs in early childhood education in order to develop and improve on in-service as well as pre-service methodologies.

The subject of pre-service and in-service teacher education in inclusive education in the United Kingdom has received considerable attention because both in-service and pre-service teacher education are considered significant factors in improving teachers' attitudes towards the implementation of policies in inclusive education (Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden, 2000). Perhaps the New Zealand, South African and Swedish examples provided in Chapter 2 are also worth mentioning. In South Africa, early childhood educators are willing to go through in-service education programmes in order to upgrade their qualifications and receive full accreditation as early childhood educators (Donald, 1996; Winer, 1996) and in New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2002), the government makes provisions for continuous professional development for early childhood educators. Sweden, on the other hand, encourages early childhood educators to go through a well-established pre-service teacher education training programmes leading to degree level (Kaman and Hallmark, 2001). These countries have realised the value of early childhood education and consequently are putting mechanisms in place to ensure that early childhood educators are well trained in the different aspects of ECD. In Botswana, for example, the National Policy of Education (1994) stresses the importance of special *education* in both pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes (Bachelor's of Education in

Special Education), calling for such programmes to be broad in order to address all aspects of special education (Abosi, 2000). It further calls for in-service education for all members of the staff in schools in order to allow for a better coordination of programmes for children with special needs at school level.

3.3.7 Parental Involvement

Parents are the first and natural educators of children, who generally assure that their children are loved, cared for and provided with rich environments in which to grow. Equally, their participation in the ECD programmes do not only benefit children, but also the parents themselves and the ECD programmes (Evans, 2000; Miller, 1996; Kochhar, West and Taymans, 2000; Stahlman, 1994). The field of early childhood education has recognised the importance of establishing positive relationships with parents. This is especially the case with parents of children who have special needs in education. With the concept of normalisation (Wolfensberger, 1972), parents have also become more involved not only in the education of their children but also in actively contributing to inclusive education settings in order to ensure that their children benefit from the same opportunities and experience as their peers who do not have disabilities. As indicated earlier in Chapter 2, a number of countries have realised the important role of parental and community involvement in inclusive education. South Africa, for example, realises the complex nature of inclusive education and has put in place legislation calling for the involvement of parents in the decision-making processes in inclusive school settings. In stressing the important role of parents and communities in inclusive education, Swart, Engelbrecht, Eloff, Pettipher and Oswald (2004) point out that placing a child with a disability in a mainstream school does not necessarily guarantee inclusion. An inclusion philosophy requires the participation and full commitment of parents in the education of their children as well as on the development of open and mutual relationships between parents and schools. Such relationships contribute to the schools' respecting the rights of all learners and promoting a sense of caring and

belonging among all learners of their diverse community. Such involvement should also take into consideration parents' participation in curriculum development, monitoring and assessment. The critical role of parents in inclusive education was also acknowledged by Lieber, Hanson, Beckman, Odom, Sandall, Schwartz, Horn and Wolery, (2000), in their study on key influences of the establishment and implementation of inclusive preschool programmes in the United States of America.

In some communities, socio-linguistic and cultural barriers may contribute to the inactive participation of parents in early childhood education programmes. In their discussion on perspectives on inclusion, Dyson and Forlin (1999) point out that in the past, disability was seen as a curse for a minority of individual sufferers associated and relied on the sympathy of members of society to assist in reducing problems related to their disabilities. In addition, Engelbrecht (1996) points out that disability was very closely linked to ignorance and superstition where people with disabilities were ridiculed, rejected or even (dis)honoured. Some parents kept their children with disabilities away from school as a face-saving gesture (Lerner, 1993:8).

Barriers in communication may also develop between the parent and the teacher if there is some insecurity in role relationships between parents and teacher and if there are no proper communication channels (Evans, 2000; Stahlman, 1994, Kochhar, West and Taymans, 2000). In order to overcome such barriers, parents, especially those with children with special educational needs should be continuously involved in the planning process at the school level. Their involvement will help the planners and school administrators to reach a greater understanding of the challenges facing children with such special needs and to design their programmes with these children in mind. In order to avoid such instances where children are denied access to education by their parents, because of their disabilities, communication between home and school will contribute to providing more information and sensitising parents to the importance of sending their children to school in spite of their special educational

needs. Thus establishing a communication routine between home and the school helps maintain a good relationship between the parent, the child and the teacher.

As indicated in Chapter 3.2.2, in the United States of America, for example, children with disabilities were often excluded from mainstream education and placed in special classrooms without the knowledge and consent of their parents. Consequently the PL 99-142 put in place legislation to prevent such practices from happening by calling for an active participation of parents of children with disabilities in the education of their children by being involved in the development of their children's programmes. The Legislation PL 99-142 did not initially cater for the needs of children between 3 and 5 years old. It was subsequently amended in 1986 to PL99-457 to cater for the rights of parents of all children who had disabilities. Parents were given more opportunities not only to participate in meetings but also to develop and evaluate their children's educational programmes (Kochhar, West and Taymans, 2000; Stahlman, 1994).

Through the previous teaching experience of the researcher and as a parent participating in school activities, the researcher has noted a tendency, especially amongst some black parents in Namibia not to show any interest in the children's activities at school. The same sentiments were also reported in the study undertaken by Möwes (2002). For parents to know their children's teachers as well as the curriculum and contexts in which their children learn, it is very important that they show keen interest and active involvement in the daily activities of their children both at home and at school. Once parents start showing such interest, teachers and children themselves become more motivated to work harder, the involvement of parents becomes even more important for children with special educational needs (Lerner, 1993; Scruggs and Mastropieri, 1994; Sibaya, 1996; Swart, Engelbrecht, Eloff, Pettipher and Oswald, 2004). Parents will be able to provide crucial information to teachers about the nature of their children's special needs that teachers on the other hand will utilise to develop programmes specifically benefiting those children. Evans

(2000) asserts that parents are sometimes not involved in ECD programmes, not because they are not interested but due to some factors such as possible lack of information and value of the ECD programme; illiteracy and lack of confidence; lack of autonomy in terms of decision making as well as long distances and long working hours, especially for mothers. In order to prevent such situations arising, the ECD programmes should also develop 'family literacy' education programmes where parents are brought together and sensitised to the benefits of early childhood education. UNESCO has been discussing the development and implementation of such programmes with Namibia and South Africa to introduce family literacy among communities.

Children who receive support from parents and family at home do better in school and families who keep an open relationship with the school are more at ease with teachers and other support staff at the school and are more comfortable with each other (Miller, 1996; Shahlman, 1994; UNESCO, 2001). As earlier pointed out, parents can provide teachers with information about their children's special educational needs, which the teacher may otherwise not have observed. Similarly, teachers may be able to provide parents with more information on how to assist their children with special educational needs at home. This sharing of information between the parent and the teacher can assist in bridging the gap between the early childhood education programme and home, facilitating a smooth learning process for the child, in which the child benefits from both learning at home and at school and thus progressing well at school. The parents should be able to observe any developmental challenges (Evans, 2000) facing the child and share such challenges with the school. While stressing the importance of placing children with special needs in early childhood education in ordinary early childhood education centres and pre-primary schools, it is equally important to point out how crucial it is to build the capacities of parents so that they know how to support their children with special needs at home. UNESCO (2001) provides the following guidelines for involving parents in their children's education:

- Parents are invited to meet the child's teacher at least once a year to

discuss the child's progress.

- Parents are involved in drawing up the individual education plan for the learners with special needs.
- Reports on the child's progress are sent to parents at the end of each term.
- Teachers are willing to visit the family at home and equally parents are invited to visit the child's classroom.
- Parents contribute to enriching the cultural and ethnic diversity of the school by participating in various cultural events organised by the school.
- Parents take an interest in assisting children with their homework.
- A notebook goes between home and school allowing teachers and parents to exchange information on a daily basis.
- Short training courses can be organised for parents.
- Parents can be linked to national associations for parents of disabled children.
- Parents' representatives are invited to participate in school board meetings.

Although not discussed within the framework of this study, an important aspect that should not be underestimated is the informal provision of early childhood care and education services provided by families and friends. These services are common, especially amongst African communities and do prepare children for formal education.

3.3.8 Community Participation

Effective management of any institution requires collaboration between that institution, government, communities, churches, the private sector and any other relevant stakeholders interested in contributing the benefit of such an institution. In this case, early childhood education institutions need to establish collaborative mechanisms between the government, communities, parents, the private sector

and any individual who may be interested in the activities of the centre (Lazarus, Daniels and Engelbrecht, 1999; Wilson, 1998). Providing communities with opportunities to contribute towards managing schools enhances the school's accountability to communities, increases teacher and student attendance, improves the efficiency of resource use, mobilises increased community support for schools, and improves student learning (UNESCO, 2003:11).

Research has indicated that communities too have been instrumental in the provision of early childhood education in many countries, as well as contributing towards an improved health care for young children, especially in the so-called developing countries (Kochhar, West and Taymans, 2000; Myers, 1990; Sailor, 1991; UNESCO, 1995). Alongside community involvement in early childhood education, there has also been church or religious institutions, non-governmental organisations and the private sector. A study done by UNESCO (1995), which reviewed the situation of special education in a number of its member states, revealed that 26 NGOs, mainly in developing countries were the main providers of inclusive education. In most cases educators involved were not necessarily trained as teachers or early childhood educators. However, these educators showed dedication and commitment to working with young children in these settings, which were often very informal.

Sailor (1991) provides examples of community participation in early childhood education to benefit those children at risk or those with special needs in education. For example, he makes mention of the Comprehensive Child Development Programme in the United States of America that contributes to intensive comprehensive, integrated and continuous support services for children from low-income families. Such services are also extended to children in early childhood settings who are at risk of disability.

Most communities are willing to contribute towards the education of children in their societies in order to reduce poverty, illiteracy and unemployment. The importance of creating caring communities in which each community member is

viewed as participating in the development of that community should be strengthened. As with parents, a continuous process should be put in place to involve communities in the conceptualisation, implementation and monitoring and evaluation as well as the funding of inclusive early childhood education programmes in their communities. Myers (1990) provides some guidelines to be used in involving communities in early childhood education:

- Programmes should be flexible and adjusted to different socio-cultural contexts.
- Programmes should be able to identify and respond to the diverse needs of communities.
- Programmes should support and build upon local ways that have been devised to cope effectively with problems of childcare and development.
- Programmes should be locally conceptualised and respectful of local cultures “constructionist versus compensatory” programming.

3.3.9 Poverty

Another barrier to education and inclusive education is poverty. Many families in poor communities are normally unemployed, live in poor housing conditions and can in most cases not afford to provide adequate resources for their children's education. As a result, some children do not have the opportunity to benefit from education services. For such children the possibility of experiencing a barrier to education becomes high. In calling for early intervention approaches to benefit all people in society, McCormick and Hickson (1996:66-67) illustrates how poverty can affect the provision of education to poor children in America, especially those living with disabilities. They argue that the majority of children in developing countries are at risk of disabilities, malnutrition, infections from communicable diseases, poor housing and lack of poor drinking water and sanitation, crime, drug and alcohol abuse and HIV and AIDS. This is mainly due to the increased levels of poverty in a number of developing countries, including Sub-Saharan Africa. The Education for All Status Report 2002, confirms the negative impact of

poverty in some societies. It states that since poverty levels are high amongst African communities in South Africa, children from these poor communities are at risk of infant death, malnutrition and stunting, poor adjustment to schooling, lower levels of achievement, and increased drop out and repetition rates at school (Department of Education, 2002). It is thus possible to conclude that poverty is a threat to learning, participation and development and should be taken into account when developing policies in inclusive early childhood education, in particular and education in general.

Since early childhood education is provided by institutions other than the government in many countries, fees are payable so some parents cannot afford to send their children to school, or even afford to feed them with a balanced diet before sending them to school. Some parents can also not afford the minimal fees to contribute towards the educational material for their children in early childhood education centres which are community or privately funded (Evans, *et al.*, 2000). Because of these factors and others mentioned above, parents feel obliged to keep their children at home until such a time that they have reached the age when they must start formal education. This means that many children do not benefit from early childhood and pre-primary education.

A well-structured public funding structure should be in place in order to meet the cost of providing adequate resources and support services for inclusive early childhood education settings. Investing in early childhood education can contribute towards reducing inequalities embedded in poverty and discrimination by giving a fair start to children from poor communities or those that may be at risk of exclusion (Myers, 1990).

3.3.10 Evaluation

Like any other programme or activity being implemented, the issue of monitoring and evaluation in early childhood education becomes very crucial. Through

monitoring and evaluating inclusive early childhood education programmes, ECD educators will be in a better position to address the new challenges facing them as well as to reform the curriculum so that it can better respond to new developments and challenges. In developing an evaluative framework for quality, Bertram and Pascal (1997:78-79) have identified 10 dimensions that need to be considered in evaluating early childhood education which will equally be relevant to the Namibia context, however, with careful planning. These are:

- *Aims and objectives of policy* – in which learning provisions are clearly explained.
- *Learning experiences and curriculum* – defining the balance of learning activities and learning opportunities provided to children.
- *Learning and teaching strategies* – how activities are organised to promote learning and development.
- *Planning, assessment and record keeping* – how effective is learning organised and who are the stakeholders in the planning process.
- *Staffing* – considering teacher-learner ratios, school and class management policies, staff development and attitudes towards learning.
- *Physical environment* – how classroom space is utilised for the benefit of the children.
- *Relationships and interactions* – the extent to which children and teachers interact, and learner initiative and participation in school and classroom activities.
- *Equal opportunities* – the extent to which diversity is appreciated and learners with special needs are accepted and included in the learning process.
- *Parental partnerships, home and community liaison* – the extent to which parents and the wider community participate in the child's learning process and the extent to which there is synergy between what is taught at home and at school.
- *Monitoring and evaluation* – procedures put in place to systematically monitor and evaluate quality and effectiveness of the learning process, considering the partners involved in the evaluation and the follow-up to

evaluation results adopting a bottom-up approach. Evaluation should be done with the subjects, not to the subjects.

3.4 SUMMARY

This Chapter discussed the provision of inclusive education in general and inclusive early childhood education in particular. It further considered the importance of inclusive education within a systems approach in which the full participation of schools and communities at large is crucial as well as inclusive education as a human rights issue.

The importance of a developmentally appropriate curriculum in an inclusive early childhood education programme is viewed as a critical component of any ECD programme, be it in a developed or developing country. Similarly, the implementation of a successful curriculum needs political commitment and both financial and human resources to ensure effective implementation of an inclusive ECD curriculum.

The Chapter also looked at the provisions of inclusive early childhood education in a selected number of both developed and developing countries. From the few examples selected, it is clear that a number of legislative commitments and inclusive policies are in place to cater for the needs of children with special needs in education. It is evident that successful inclusion depends on the manner in which programmes are coordinated from the central level to the provincial, municipal, local and school level, including the participation of parents and communities. It is also evident that early childhood inclusive education programmes successfully allow all children, irrespective of developmental challenges, to benefit from the same educational opportunities.

The need for partnerships between school and the community, as well as parental involvement, is vital in an inclusive education context. Effective

communication between parents and the early childhood education centre can clearly result in the effective implementation of inclusive education programmes. Such communication also results in the appreciation of both parents and teachers of the diverse cultures that make up an early childhood education centre and thus promote a culture of learning to live together.

Factors that may negatively or positively influence inclusion in early childhood education were also discussed in this Chapter. Amongst such factors is the attitude of teachers and teacher educators towards inclusion and inclusive education.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will describe the research design and the methodology used in the research which was undertaken in order to obtain information on the provision of an inclusive approach in early childhood education in Namibia.

This research was undertaken in order to obtain an understanding and appreciation of the situation of early childhood education in Namibia. The purpose of the research was to inform policy development through the proposal of guidelines for an inclusive early childhood and pre-primary education approach in Namibia within an ecosystemic framework. The research questions were derived from the researcher's knowledge of the literature on the importance of an inclusive approach to early childhood education as well as from the researcher's professional experience in early childhood education.

4.2 THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.2.1 Research Paradigm and Design

In Chapter 1.6.1 reference is made to Babbie and Mouton (2001) who explain that a research design is called a *plan or blueprint*. This provides or guides the researcher on how to undertake the research. Similarly, Oppenheim (2002), refers to a research design as a basic plan or strategy of the research. It is the

research design that determines the type of research methods and procedures the researcher will adopt based on the type of the research problem to be addressed.

As discussed briefly in the same section in Chapter 1, the design of this study is located within a positivist research paradigm. The positivist paradigm is based on the notion that social research should be rooted in the model and logic of social sciences. Logical positivism argues that all questions can be treated scientifically and that factual knowledge is part of a single system of science, stressing empirical and analytical verification of knowledge. The positivist approach argues that the methodological dimensions of science depend on logic, so scientists apply the principle of deductive logic in the assessment of new hypotheses to guarantee the probability of theories. A positivist perceives social science research as

an organised method for combining deductive logic with precise empirical observations of individual behaviour in order to discover and confirm set of probabilistic causal laws that can be used to predict general patterns of human behaviour (Neuman, 2000:66).

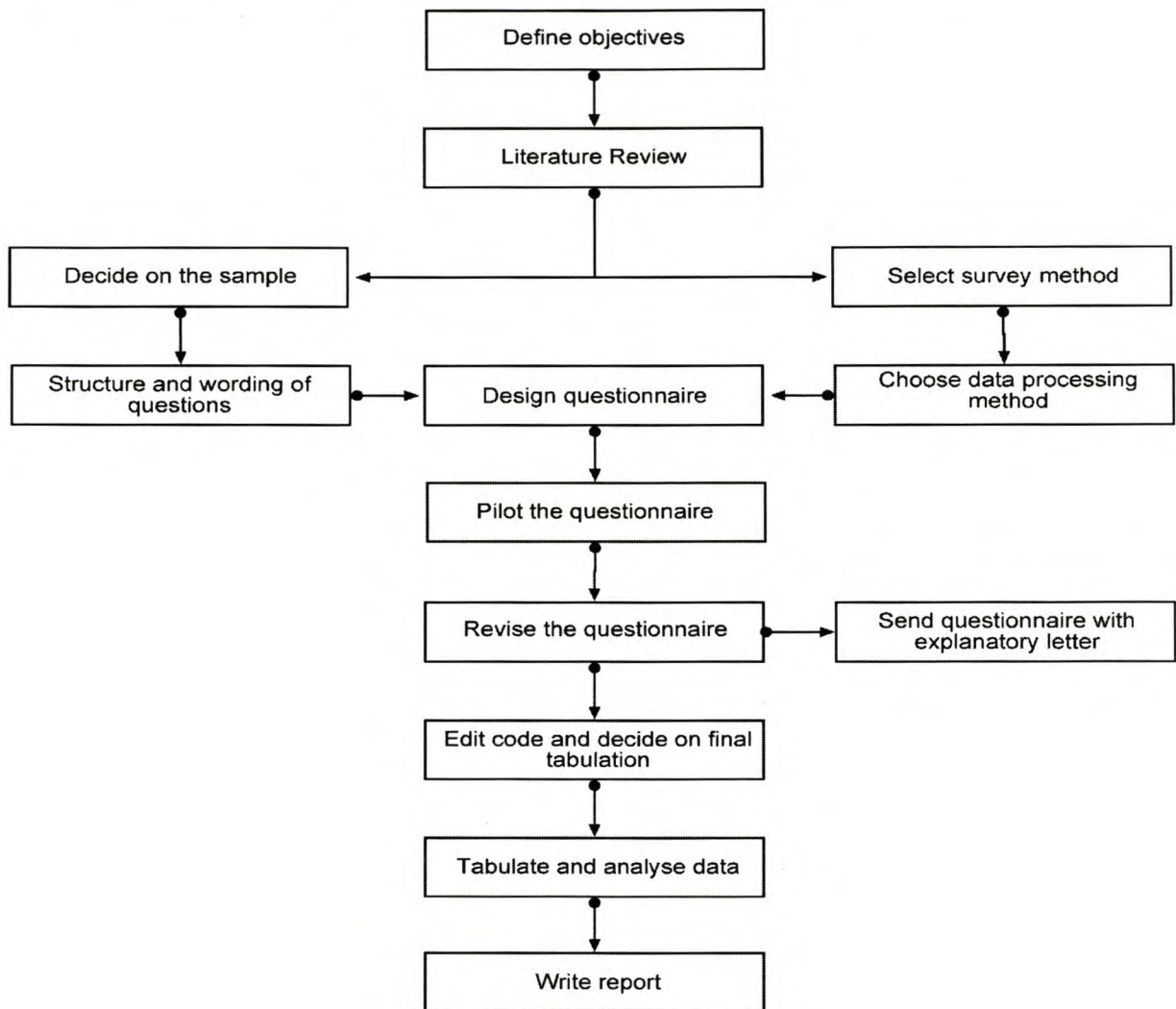
Varieties of positivistic approaches are used in present day research, ranging from empiricism, post-positivism, naturalism and behaviourism. Positivism favours a quantitative research approach, while relying on experiments and surveys.

The design, as discussed in Chapter 1.6.1, makes use of a quantitative survey research method which is regarded as the most descriptive method in educational research (Cohen and Manion, 1997; Mertens, 1998). In quantitative studies, researchers test or verify a theory by engaging in deductive logic rather than using inductive reasoning to develop a theory (Cohen and Manion, 1997; Trochim, 2002). The survey method used in this study involved the development of a questionnaire that was distributed amongst a representational sample of early childhood educators in all 13 educational regions in Namibia. The first step

in conducting a survey is to write the purpose and objectives of conducting the survey (Mertens, 1998). In this case, the study set out to determine:

- The implications for implementing early childhood inclusive education both internationally as well as in Namibia.
- The situation in Namibia regarding the functioning of early childhood education centres with specific reference to the perceptions and preferences of early childhood educators in the overall process of educating children with special educational needs.
- The nature of guidelines to be offered to the ministries responsible for education and for the welfare of children for the development of an inclusive approach in early childhood education in Namibia.

Answers to these questions were sought through extensive literature review as well as from the responses to questionnaires sent to early childhood educators. These early childhood educators were selected by means of systematic and purposive sampling. The researcher particularly adopted the use of the questionnaire as it allowed for the standardization and uniformity of both the questions asked and in the method of approaching the sample population as well as for the ease of comparing and contrasting the respondents' answers. The questionnaire also ensured a higher reliability. One of the advantages of using the survey research was the fact that it provided the researcher with the possibility of collecting data from a large population sample in a relatively short period as opposed to other design methods such as interviews (Cohen and Manion, 1997; Mertens, 1998). Interviews would have been time consuming and expensive to conduct in this case due to the long distances between towns and cities in Namibia. The survey research methods proved to be relatively inexpensive because the questionnaires were distributed by the Ministry of Women Affairs and Child Welfare. This meant that the researcher did not have to post 650 questionnaires to respondents across the country thus saving on postage costs.

FIGURE 4.1: STAGES ADOPTED IN THE DESIGN OF THE SURVEY

Adapted from Cohen and Manion (1997)

Besides, the advantages mentioned above, it should be noted that surveys also have a number of disadvantages, which should be considered in doing research. For example, since the respondents are in most cases aware of the fact that they are being studied, the information that they provide may not be valid as the respondents may provide answers based on their assumptions of what the researcher expects to hear. In addition, respondents may not be willing to or interested in responding to the questionnaire, unlike in an interview where the

researcher can influence the respondent to collaborate. In the current study the response rate was 493 out of the 650 questionnaires distributed. There are currently over 3000 registered ECD centres in Namibia according to information from the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare. Figure 4.1 indicates the stages followed in undertaking the present survey research.

4.3 METHODOLOGY

4.3.1 Data Collection Methods

This section provides an overview of the methods adopted in collecting data to undertake the research study. The fact that data on inclusive early childhood education in Namibia was not readily available encouraged the researcher to undertake the survey in order to inform policy development and guide strategic planning on inclusive early childhood education in Namibia.

4.3.1.1 Literature Review

A literature review is an effective means of providing a foundation for undertaking any research. It provides the researcher with the opportunity to analyse, compare and contrast existing information in light of newly acquired information, and can help to formulate the research problem and solve design questions (Fouché and Delport, 2002; Mertens, 1998; Merriam 2002:50-51, Oppenheim, 2002). It is an important element in planning the research because it provides a context, background and empirical basis for the study. Merriam (2002) asserts that there are usually varied opinions concerning the best time for the literature review. While some researchers believe that literature review should be undertaken earlier in the study, others believe that it should be done after the data collection procedures.

Undertaking the literature review earlier in the study greatly contributed to the researcher becoming well informed about issues pertaining to inclusive education in general and inclusive early childhood education in particular. The review of the literature provided the researcher with information regarding innovations in inclusive early childhood education on an international scale as described in Chapters 2 and 3 (Edwards and Knight, 1994; Klein and Chen, 2001; Mallory and New, 1994; Petersen, 1988). Furthermore, it significantly contributed to the identification of the theoretical framework that informed the basis of this study as well as in shaping the research problems (Merriam, 2002). As there is hardly any literature on the subject of inclusive early childhood education in Namibia, most of the literature was thus drawn from international publications, journals, newspapers and articles (Möwes, 2002), including the World Wide Web. This raised two special challenges. The researcher recognised that all such information needs to be understood within the international context from which it comes, and secondly, any interpretation and application of such data to the *Namibian* context would need to be done with caution.

4.3.1.2 Questionnaires

The success of any research study depends on the in-depth and diversity of data sources examined, the thoroughness with which data are collected from these sources and the methodical way in which data are analysed. While doing the literature review, the researcher obtained a number of sample questionnaires related to inclusive education to study, particularly from the University of Stellenbosch Department of Educational Psychology and from the University of Namibia Faculty of Education. The selection of topics and questions for the questionnaire was guided by previous studies conducted on various aspects of inclusive education. After having studied several questionnaires, the researcher developed a specific questionnaire which adapted some of the instruments from the various literature reviews to inform the questionnaire on inclusive early childhood education in Namibia. The draft questionnaire was shared with the

Consultant from the Statistics Department at the University of Stellenbosch, who provided comments on the design and content of the whole questionnaire.

The questionnaires were written and rewritten for clarity in order to relate them to the research question. They had four sections consisting of dependent and independent variables. The four sections covered areas of teachers' academic qualifications and experience, the physical environment including facilities, challenges being faced, the curriculum and policies in place, and support services provided by the government or private sector along with the community.

Part 1 looked at biographical information on the particular centre such as the region in which the centre is situated, language background of educators, their age and gender, teaching qualifications, experience and the number of children in a class. Obtaining such information provided the researcher with a clear picture of the content in which the framework of programmes were being implemented in terms of regions as well as the level of experience and qualifications of the teachers and the Head teachers. Experience and qualification may have a negative or positive impact on the children's learning outcomes hence the interest in obtaining such data. Variations and similarities across regions were also considered.

Part 2 consisted of information on the physical environment of the Centre, including water and space. Such questions enabled the researcher to obtain more information on whether the ECD Centres are able to adhere to health regulations and thus whether or not they can ensure the safety and health of children at all times.

Part 3 focused more on the challenges faced by educators at the early childhood centres in terms of the special needs of children.

Part 4 focused on the curriculum and policies in place and whether or not educators are actually implementing such policies in the classroom as well as on

examining the relationship between the centres and the community environment.

Questions were designed on the basis of the Likert-scale based on a 'yes', 'no', 'not sure', 'don't know' scale and in some questions respondents simply had to make a cross to the answer or simply choose 'yes' or 'no'. Some statements required respondents to indicate the nature and frequency of educational problems encountered at the centres by ticking an option from 'always', 'often', 'occasionally', 'never', and 'not sure'. Some open-ended questions were included in order to get some explanations from the respondents with regard to their knowledge about the content of the early childhood education policy. The purpose of closed-ended structured questionnaires in this case was to obtain information and opinions of early childhood educators about the provisions of inclusive education in Namibia. Validity of responses would be high in the questionnaire, as the respondents will provide information to the same questions.

One of the concerns raised with regard to the use of questionnaires in survey research is the issue of validity (Cohen and Manion, 1997; Merriam, 2002; Neuman, 2000). Respondents may and may not accurately reflect the attributes in which the researcher is interested. Another issue normally raised in research is whether the data collected will be consistently interpreted. The questionnaires were therefore clearly worded in order to avoid a variety of interpretations of the same questions by different respondents in order to guarantee reliability of the data and the results. As in most research, in order to ensure validity and reliability of instruments being used, it is crucial to pilot test the instruments. The questionnaires were pilot tested on a sample group of respondents drawn from all the targets as mentioned above. Modifications and improvements on both the format and content were introduced after the piloting. One should, be aware of errors that may arise in doing quantitative research. These could be errors such as failure to interpret statistical significance and failure to report and to interpret effect sizes present in a quantitative analysis.

- **Piloting the Questionnaire**

As indicated in Chapter 1 (1.6.2.3), the questionnaire was pre-tested on a smaller population sample group, consisting of 5 respondents all based in the Windhoek region, which included one ECD Coordinator in the Ministry of Women Affairs and Gender Equality, two ECD educators from a private ECD centre in Windhoek, a statistician from NEPRU and a colleague from the UNESCO Windhoek Office. The purpose of piloting the questionnaire was to ensure its reliability and validity as well as to ensure that the design was feasible. It was also important to pilot test the questionnaire in order to:

- Avoid any misinterpretations of the questions.
- Avoid ambiguity, jargon and vague questions.
- Avoid any sensitive questions.
- Ensure that data collected would provide relevant data to be analysed effectively for the purpose of the research questions.

Although it was only piloted on a smaller number of subjects, a variety of practical questions were determined, for example can the subjects understand the language of the questionnaire or whether the subjects provide relevant answers to the questions?

- **Improving the Questionnaire**

A number of valid errors were recorded and submitted to the researcher for further editing and revision of the questionnaire. In general, the questionnaire was regarded as reliable and well structured, containing questions that would elicit useful data on information concerning access to an inclusive early childhood education in Namibia. Besides improving the formatting and correction the typographic errors, other improvements were made as follows:

Part 1.3 Read:	What is your current Title at the Centre? Was rephrased to read: What is your current situation at the Centre?
Part 1. 9 Read:	What are your qualifications? Was rephrased to read: What is your highest qualification?
Part 1.10 Read:	Are you trained in special needs education in early childhood education? Was rephrased to read: Have you received any specialised training to teach children with special needs (e.g. children with disabilities)?
Part 2.1 (b) Read:	Are the toilets flush or pit?: Was rephrased to read: 2. Are the toilets flush? 3. Are the toilets pit?
Part 4 (f) Read:	Are the teaching methods suitable for all children in the classroom? Was rephrased to read: Do you adapt your teaching methods in order to suit the learning needs of all children in your classroom?

4.3.2 The Sample

In identifying a sample in research, a distinction is normally made between the theoretical population of interest to our study and the actual sample to be finally measured in the research. Usually the term sample refers to the population group that is identified and selected to participate in the research conducted (Cohen and Manion, 1997). In this case, the sample for this research study was 650 early childhood education providers from all thirteen educational regions of Namibia (See Annex 2), which was statistically significant of that population group. There are over 3000 ECD Centres in Namibia in 2005, according to information from the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare.

It should be noted that great care was taken in specifying who should be included in the sample to draw valid and reliable conclusions and to generalise the sample to a wider early childhood educators population in Namibia. Reliability concerns the degree to which a particular measuring procedure is consistent and provides similar results over a number of repeated tests, while validity relates to the degree in which an empirical measure of a concept accurately represents that concept.

As discussed in Chapter 1.6.2.2 there are different types of sampling that can be applied in doing research such as probability and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling provides the researcher with the opportunity to generalise the results from a sample to a wider population from which it is initially drawn. For example, the early childhood education centres and educators were selected using a systematic sampling procedure in which each 5th ECD Centre and 3rd educator was selected, giving them an equal opportunity of being selected amongst that population group of ECD centres around the country (Babbie and Mouton, 2001; Creswell, 2003, Cohen and Manion, 1984). A purposeful sampling approach was applied with regard to the Heads of the early childhood education centres in order to obtain particular information concerning the level of their education and experience and the level of their knowledge about inclusive education. The Heads of the Centres were specifically identified due to the nature of their managerial responsibilities at early childhood education centres in order to provide an insight into their knowledge of inclusive and early childhood education issues, which are of considerable importance for this research study. A total number of 650 questionnaires were distributed to early childhood education centres in all 13 educational regions in Namibia of which 493 completed questionnaires were received (see Figure 5.1, Chapter 5.2.1). Such information provided the researcher with in-depth knowledge concerning the relevant interventions to be proposed in developing an inclusive approach to early childhood education in Namibia.

4.3.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis is concerned with the process adopted by the researcher to interpret the research findings. The data analysis approach normally depends on the research questions, for instance using descriptive statistics to describe the situation of inclusive early childhood education in Namibia. Non-experimental research does not involve the manipulation of conditions in the research setting. It aims to describe social phenomena by examining the relationship between

variables rather than cause and effect relationships. It is an important means of establishing a foundation of knowledge about an uncharacterised social phenomenon, which may guide future research. Data from the questionnaires was encoded onto an Excel spreadsheet and analysed using a statistical package **Statistica v6** from the University of Stellenbosch Centre for Statistical Consultation. **Statistica v6** was applied in order to obtain statistical data on the knowledge of early childhood educators about special needs and policies available in early childhood education in Namibia.

4.3.4 Validity and Reliability of the Research Findings

A number of factors have been identified that may affect the validity of a study (Cohen and Manion, 1997). For example, unrelated events may occur during the course of the study and may produce results that can be attributed to differences in treatment. In addition, depending on the duration of the research study, the sample being studied may change over a period of time and result in differences that are independent of the experimental treatment. Unreliable instruments or tests can equally introduce errors into the experiment, which may all be threats to internal validity. Threats to external validity may be caused by the researcher's failure to clearly describe independent variables as well as due to the inadequate operationalisation of dependent variable. Moreover, the lack of representativeness of the population to which the findings are generalised may be a threat to external validity. External validity may possibly be threatened if the population sample responds artificially by providing responses they believe the researcher wants to hear, which would not reflect the typical behaviour of the population from which they were drawn. Cohen and Manion (1997), refers to another factor that may affect internal validity, namely the *Hawthorne effect* where participants in a study may feel that they are more privileged or deprived than others. This positively or negatively affects their performance. It should be stressed that as soon as the research design lacks internal validity, external validity becomes impossible. The present research study has, however, ensured a high degree of

validity and reliability through the format of the research design, the manner in which the population sample was selected as well as in designing and administering the questionnaire and in the data analysis.

4.4 SUMMARY

This Chapter described the research methodology adopted in undertaking a study on inclusive early childhood education in Namibia. The review of literature is crucial in any research undertaken because it provides the researcher with information on various studies undertaken both nationally and internationally on approaches to early childhood inclusive education. Recent debates on inclusion and inclusive education have challenged previous assumptions that children with disabilities or any other special needs in education cannot be taught in the same classroom settings as their peers without the *so-called* special needs in education. The literature review was therefore considered a vital aspect of undertaking the study, since it made it possible to obtain more information on current approaches to inclusive education.

The chapter provided an insight into the quantitative survey approach that was adopted in the study. Survey research rests on the assumption that a carefully selected sample can be used to produce reliable information about a much larger population in a short time. In this case information from 493 respondents was obtained over a period of three months. The most widely used method of data collection was the questionnaire which was structured to allow for a larger number of respondents to be compared directly enhancing the degree of reliability. The researcher had to ensure that the population being studied represents the total population for any data to be generalised. The importance of pre-testing a questionnaire in order to avoid any ambiguities and to ensure validity and reliability was also discussed in the Chapter. The next Chapter discusses the research results.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH RESULTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discussed the methodology for the present study. This chapter interprets the survey results before any general conclusions are drawn from the sample of the population of early childhood educators in Namibia to a broader framework taking into account previous findings as indicated in the literature review. Once conclusions have been drawn, reflecting some characteristics of early childhood educators, the findings can be generalised to a larger population of ECD educators in Namibia. The interpretation of these results will help to identify possible similarities, important flaws or relevant variables that might have been overlooked either by the present study or by previous studies in the same field of educational research. Conclusions from the research results will then be integrated within the theoretical framework of this study.

5.2 BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

5.2.1 Region in which the Centre is Situated

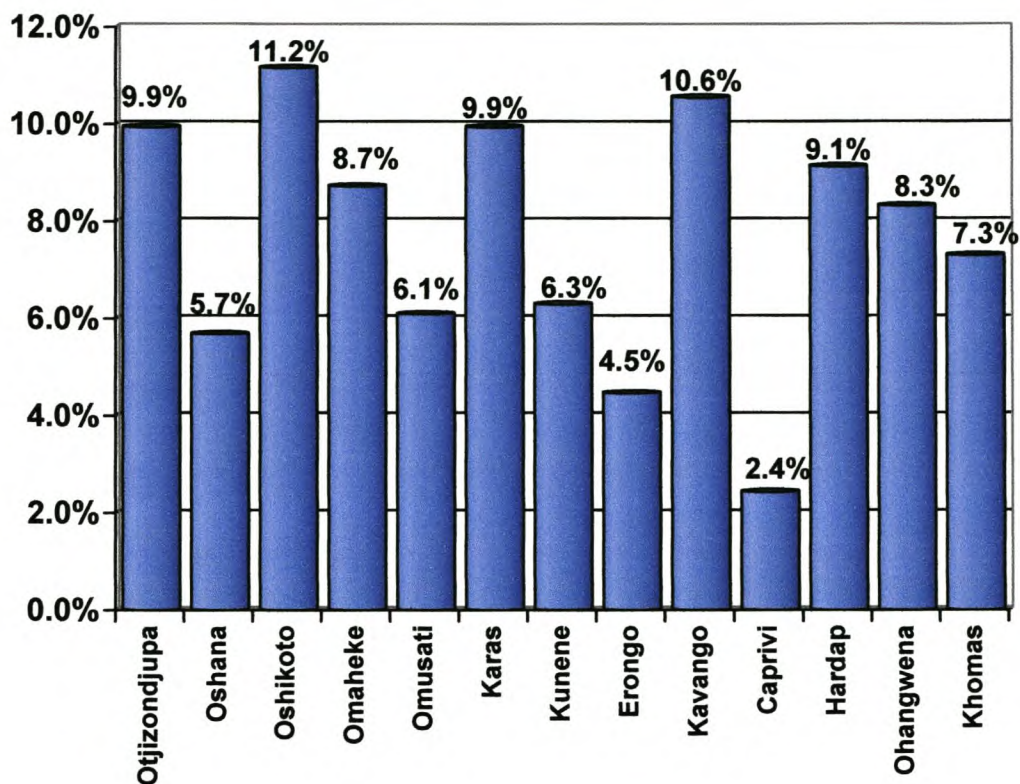
Namibia is a vast country divided into 13 educational regions. It was necessary to do the survey research in all 13 educational regions in order to obtain data which is representative of the population on which the survey was undertaken. Obtaining information on the provisions of early childhood education according to

regions is expected to inform the researcher about the importance attached to early childhood education in each region. It is expected that the different educational regions will produce different results both in terms of teacher qualifications, knowledge of inclusive education and the curriculum in place as well as support services provided by communities and parents.

TABLE 5.1 DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS ACROSS REGIONS IN NAMIBIA

Regions in Namibia	N	%
Otjizondjupa	49	9,9
Oshana	28	5,7
Oshikoto	55	11,2
Omaheke	43	8,7
Omusati	30	6,1
Karas	49	9,9
Kunene	31	6,3
Erongo	22	4,5
Kavango	52	10,6
Caprivi	12	2,4
Hardap	45	9,1
Ohangwena	41	8,3
Khommas	36	7,3
TOTAL	493	100,0

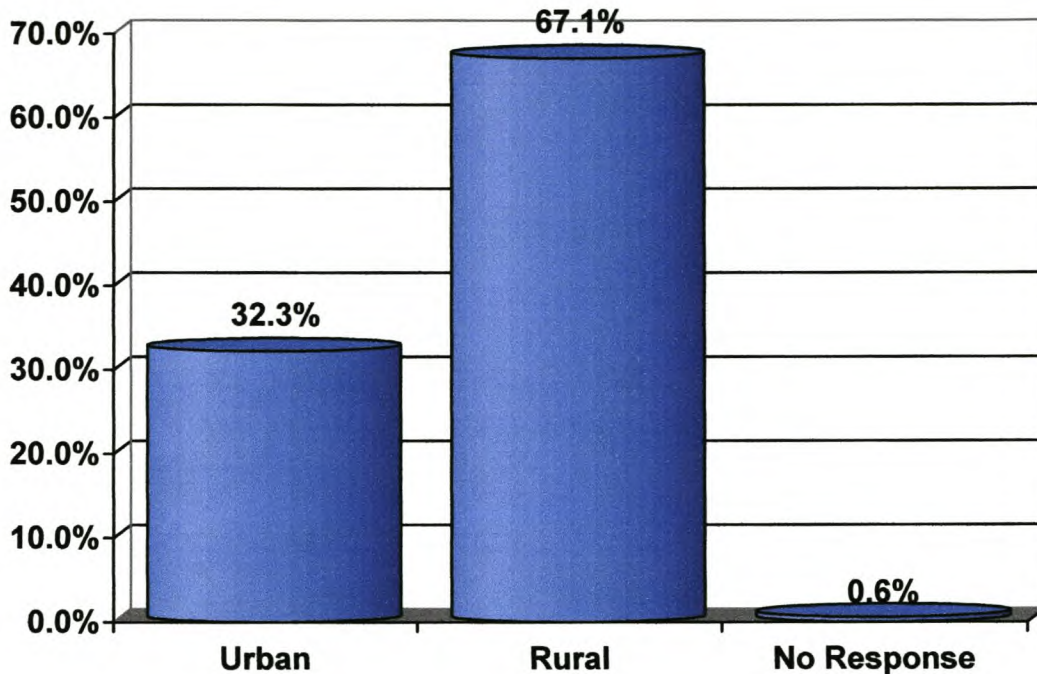
Out of a total number of 493 respondents from all the 13 educational regions, the majority of respondents (11,2%), indicated that their centres are situated in the Oshikoto Region, while 10,6% indicated that they are situated in the Kavango Region, representing 55 and 52 respondents, respectively. Figure 5.1 shows the distribution of respondents over the different areas.

FIGURE 5.1 DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS ACROSS REGIONS IN NAMIBIA

The total number of respondents who indicated that their centres are in urban areas is 32,3% while 67,1% respondents indicated that they are from rural areas. Three respondents (0,6%) did not respond on this question (see Table 5.2 and Figure 5.2).

TABLE 5.2 DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY URBAN AND RURAL AREAS

Question 2	N	%
Urban	159	32,3
Rural	331	67,1
No response	3	0,6
TOTAL	493	100,0

FIGURE 5.2 DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY URBAN AND RURAL AREAS

5.2.2 Type of ECD Centre

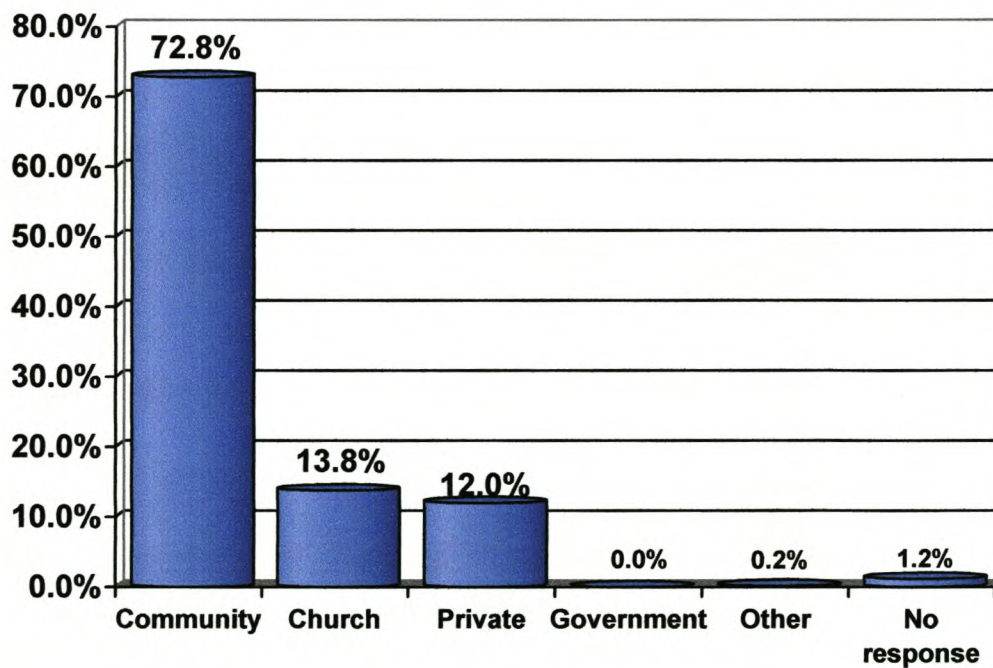
The type of institution providing early childhood education is an important variable. The impact of quality education depends on the responsibility of the government with regard to curriculum development, teacher education and funding as well as the services provided, be it by the government, communities or the private sector. It is important to have information about the knowledge and experience of the community as well as to assess their strengths and challenges with regard to the provisions of early childhood education. With regard to the type of centres, it is clear that early childhood education in Namibia is the responsibility of communities and to some extent the churches and the private sector. Out of the total number of 493 respondents, 359 (72,8%) indicated that their centres are community centres with only 13,8% (68) and 12,0% (59),

respectively, being church and private centres. See Table 5.3 as well as Figure 5.3.

TABLE 5.3 INSTITUTIONS PROVIDING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Question 4	N	%
Community	359	72,8
Church	68	13,8
Private	59	12,0
Government	0	0,0
Other	1	0,2
No response	6	1,2
TOTAL	493	100,0

FIGURE 5.3 INSTITUTIONS PROVIDING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION



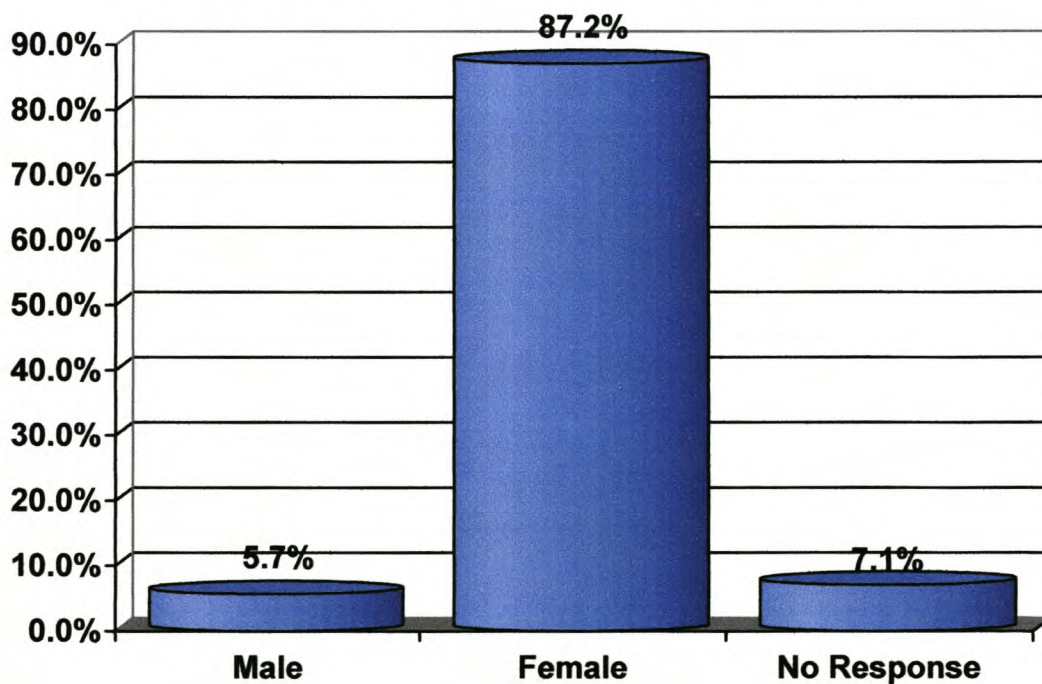
5.2.4 Gender of Educators

The responsibility for early childhood education in Namibia seems to be considered as the domain of female teachers. Out of a total number of 493 respondents, 87,2% (430) are female, while only 5,7% (28) of the teachers are male (see Figure 5.4). 35 (7,1%) did not respond on this question.

TABLE 5.4 GENDER OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

Question 5	N	%
Male	28	5,7
Female	430	87,2
No response	35	7,1
TOTAL	493	100,0

FIGURE 5.4 GENDER OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

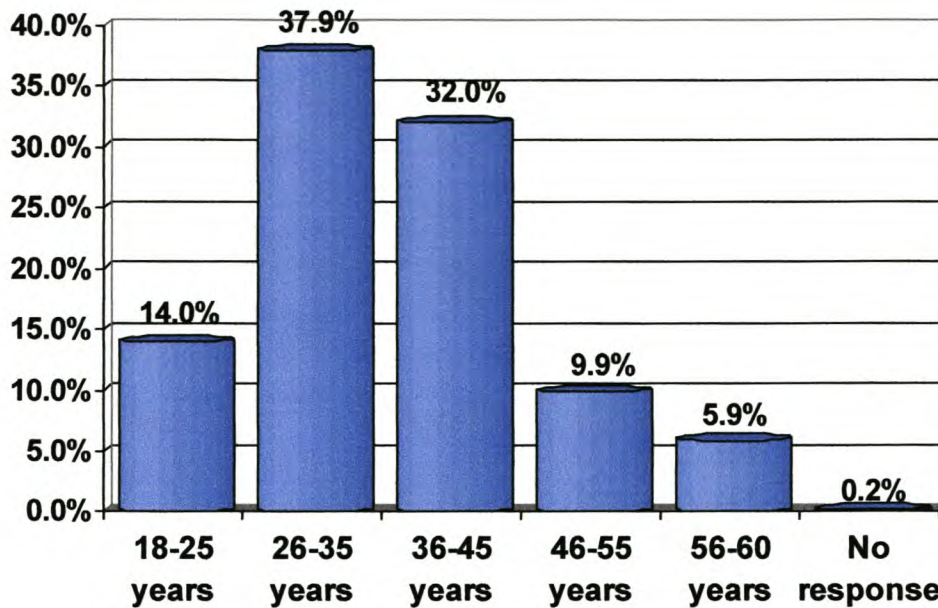


5.2.5 Language and Age Group of Early Childhood Educators

In undertaking any study, it is crucial to identify different language and cultural groups in a society. Getting information on the language of the early childhood educator also provides the researcher with information about the culture and language background of the teacher and the possible language used in the centre. The cultural background of the teacher may have an impact on how children learn. The culture of both the teacher and the child will influence development in various ways (for example, ways of how children from different cultures communicate with adults or take on responsibility may vary between boys and girls (Evans *et al.*, 2000). Of the 463 respondents to this question, 38% indicated that their home language is Oshiwambo; 16%, Khoekhoegowab; 22% Afrikaans; 16% Herero; 10% Rukwangali; 8%; English 3%; Lozi 2% and German 0%. It is important to note that the language policy for schools place emphasis on the use of the first language, especially during a child's early years of schooling (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993).

TABLE 5.5 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR BY AGE CATEGORY

Question 7	N	%
18 – 25 years	69	14,0
26 – 35 years	187	37,9
36 – 45 years	158	32,0
46 – 55 years	49	9,9
56 – 60 years	29	5,9
No response	1	0,2
TOTAL	493	100,0

FIGURE 5.5 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR BY AGE CATEGORY

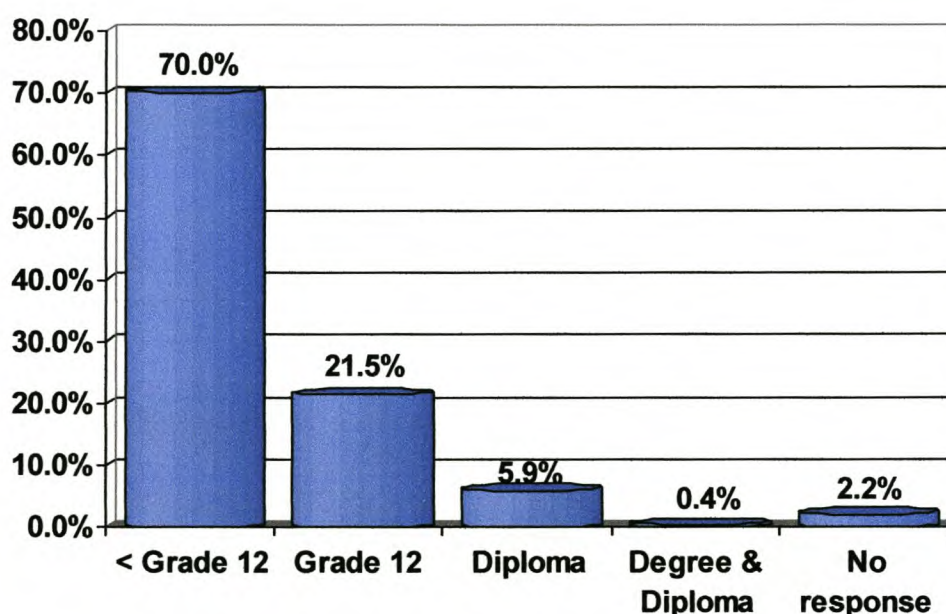
From the respondents, as indicated in Figure 5.5, the majority of early childhood educators are found in the age group of between 26 and 35 years of age, which represents 37,9% of the total number of respondents followed by the age group of between 36 and 45 years old representing 32%.

5.2.6 Qualifications and Experience of Early Childhood Educators

The qualification and experience of an early childhood educator is crucial in terms of having the necessary skills to build the cognitive and psycho-social development. Equally, a qualified teacher would be in a better position to prepare children for formal education as well as to identify children who may need educational interventions in order to prevent future learning difficulties. In addition, the qualification and experience of the early childhood educator will certainly affect the quality of learning outcomes in early childhood education as well as on the effectiveness of the inclusive approach to early childhood education.

TABLE 5.6 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS BY QUALIFICATION

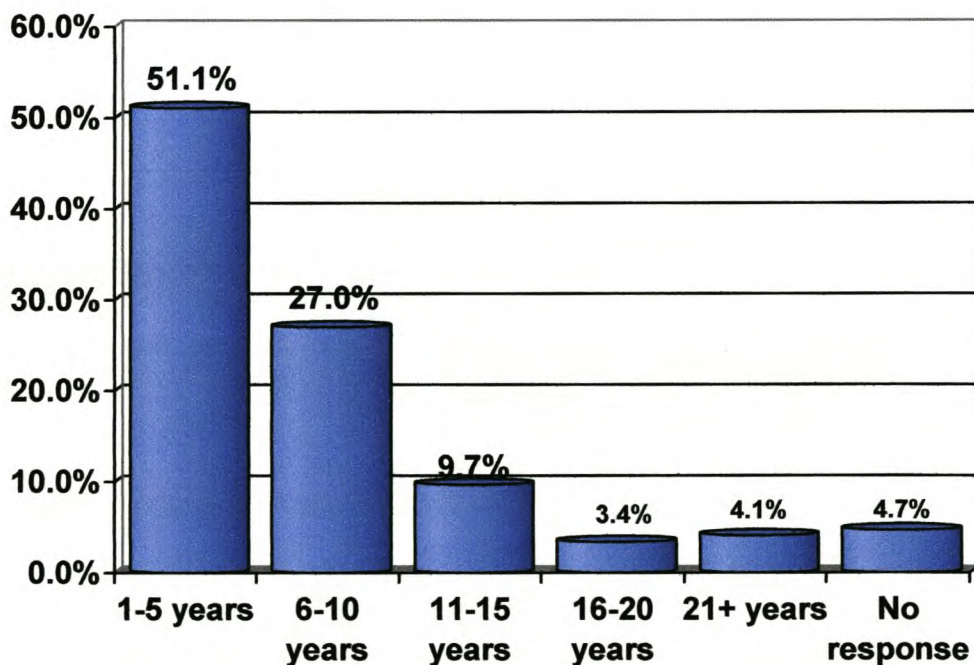
Question 9	N	%
Less than Grade 12	345	70,0
Grade 12	106	21,5
Diploma	29	5,9
Degree and Diploma	2	0,4
No response	11	2,2
TOTAL	493	100,0

FIGURE 5.6 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS BY QUALIFICATION

A great majority of early childhood educators in Namibia, representing 70,0% of the respondents, teach with less than a Grade 12 qualification with 21,5% with a Grade 12 qualification. Only 5,9% respondents have a diploma in teaching and 0,4% have a degree in teaching (see Figure 5.6). 2,2% of the respondents did not answer the question. Equally, these teachers do not have any specialised training in early childhood education, nor do they have the relevant experience to teach children with special needs in early childhood education in Namibia.

TABLE 5.7 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS BY TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Question 8	N	%
1 to 5 years	252	51,1
6 to 10 years	133	27,0
11 to 15 years	48	9,7
16 to 20 years	17	3,4
21 years and older	20	4,1
No response	23	4,7
TOTAL	493	100,0

FIGURE 5.7 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS BY TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Only 51,1% of the respondents, as can be seen in Figure 5.7, had between 1 and 5 years teaching experience while 27,0% had between six and ten years teaching experience, 9,7% had an experience of between eleven and fifteen years, 3,4% had taught between 16 and 20 years and 4,1% had taught for more

than 20 years. 4,7% of the respondents did not response.

5.2.7 Position at the Centre

Out of a total number of 483 respondents to this question, 68% (329) are teachers, 29% (140) are Heads of the Centre, with only 3% (14) Deputy Head of the Centre.

5.2.8 Number of Children in a Class

It is very important to provide a fair start to all children, irrespective of their gender. The question on the average number of boys and girls in a classroom was asked in order to obtain information on whether both boys and girls are provided equal opportunities to attend early childhood education in Namibia. The gender gap between boys and girls benefiting from early childhood education in Namibia is not significant. According to table 5.8 there are an average number of 14 boys compared to an average number of 15 girl respondents in a class.

The question on the average number of children needing special attention in a classroom was asked in order to obtain the relevant information on whether teachers are aware that they may have children who have special needs in their classroom. Children with special educational needs also need attention, affection and to learn just like their peers without special needs in the classroom. From the data obtained, there seem to be more girls than boys with special educational needs in early childhood education centres. There are an average number of 3 boys per class per respondent, compared to an average number of 4 girls per class needing special attention in early childhood education centres in Namibia.

TABLE 5.8 NUMBER OF BOYS AND GIRLS IN A CLASS AND NUMBER OF BOYS AND GIRLS NEEDING SPECIAL ATTENTION

Variable	Descriptive Statistics (data.sta)					
	Valid N	Mean	Median	Minimum	Maximum	Std Dev
Question 13 (boys)	481	14.21622	12.00000	2.000000	90.00000	9.68155
Question 13 (girls)	480	15.17083	12.50000	1.000000	91.00000	10.10467
Question 14 (boys)	215	3.62326	2.00000	1.000000	31.00000	3.92838
Question 14 (girls)	193	4.08808	3.00000	1.000000	34.00000	4.29480

5.3 THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE CENTRE

It is very important that children learn in an environment that is safe and conducive to learning and play. Equally, school health is a very important aspect of a child's education and should become part of the school system and the curriculum. Obtaining information on the physical environment of the centre is very important in order to determine whether children do, in fact, receive their education in a safe and healthy environment. The child's environment, whether at home or at school, should support child development by offering various opportunities for interactive experiences that are challenging and safe for the child. Evans *et al.*, (2000), emphasise the importance of providing a healthy environment with adequate space and material for children to learn through play. Obtaining data according to region also facilitates information on the necessary measures to be undertaken to provide support services to those regions that may be more in need of such services. A set of questions were asked on the actual physical environment of the early childhood education centres, ranging from toilet facilities to the supply of water and space both in and outside of the centre. Questions were also asked to establish whether children with physical disabilities are catered for and whether they are provided the opportunity to play in a safe environment at school. Data obtained indicate disparities in the provision of facilities in rural areas as opposed to urban areas.

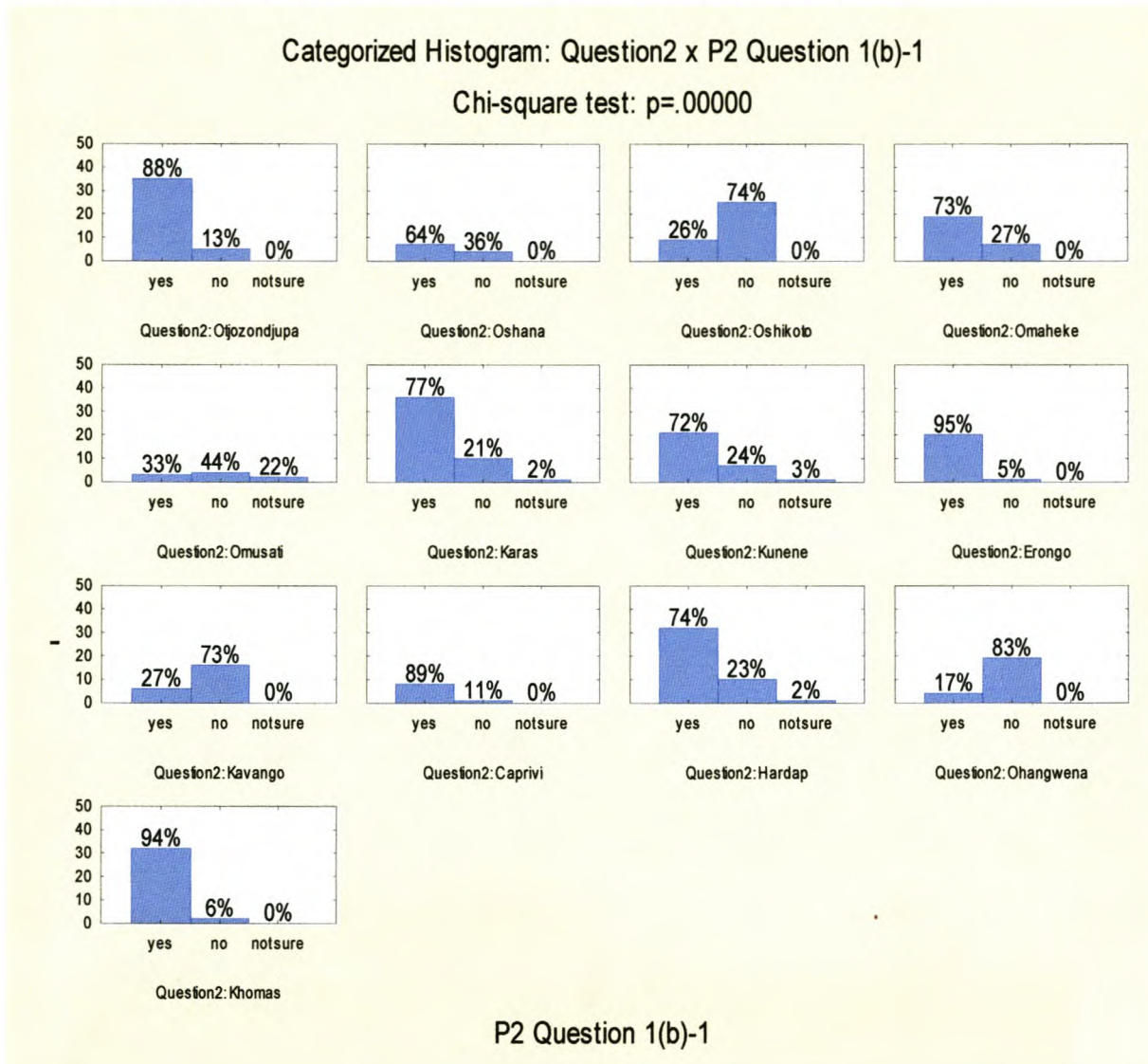
5.3.1 Physical Environment of the Centre

It is the responsibility of teachers, while at school, to instil in children healthy habits and cleanliness. One of the important aspects of health is to teach children to flush the toilet after every use, wash their hands after using the toilet, or before eating their food. Having a regular water supply is thus important for any early childhood education centre. Far northern regions of the country, which are also rural, do not seem to have functional and clean toilet facilities at their centres. The responses from the northern part of the country revealed that 74% of respondents from the Oshikoto, 83% from Ohangwena and 73% from the Kavango region indicated that they do not have clean and functional toilet facilities in their centres.

5.3.2 Functional Toilet Facilities

The regions with clean and functional toilet facilities were Erongo region with 95% of the respondents indicating that their centres had clean and functional toilet facilities while only 17% of the respondents from the Ohangwena region indicated the same (see Figure 5.8).

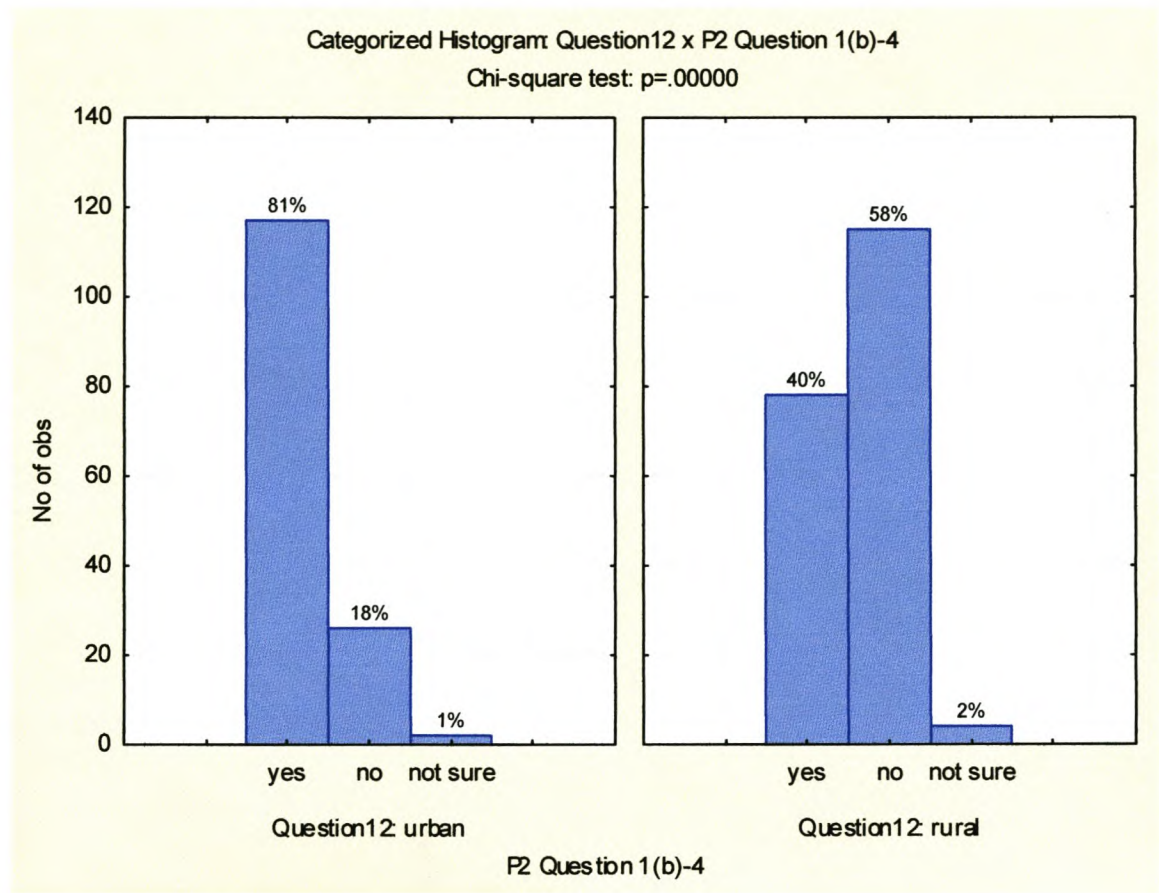
FIGURE 5.8 FUNCTIONAL TOILET FACILITIES BY REGION



5.3.3 Hand Washing Facilities and Soap

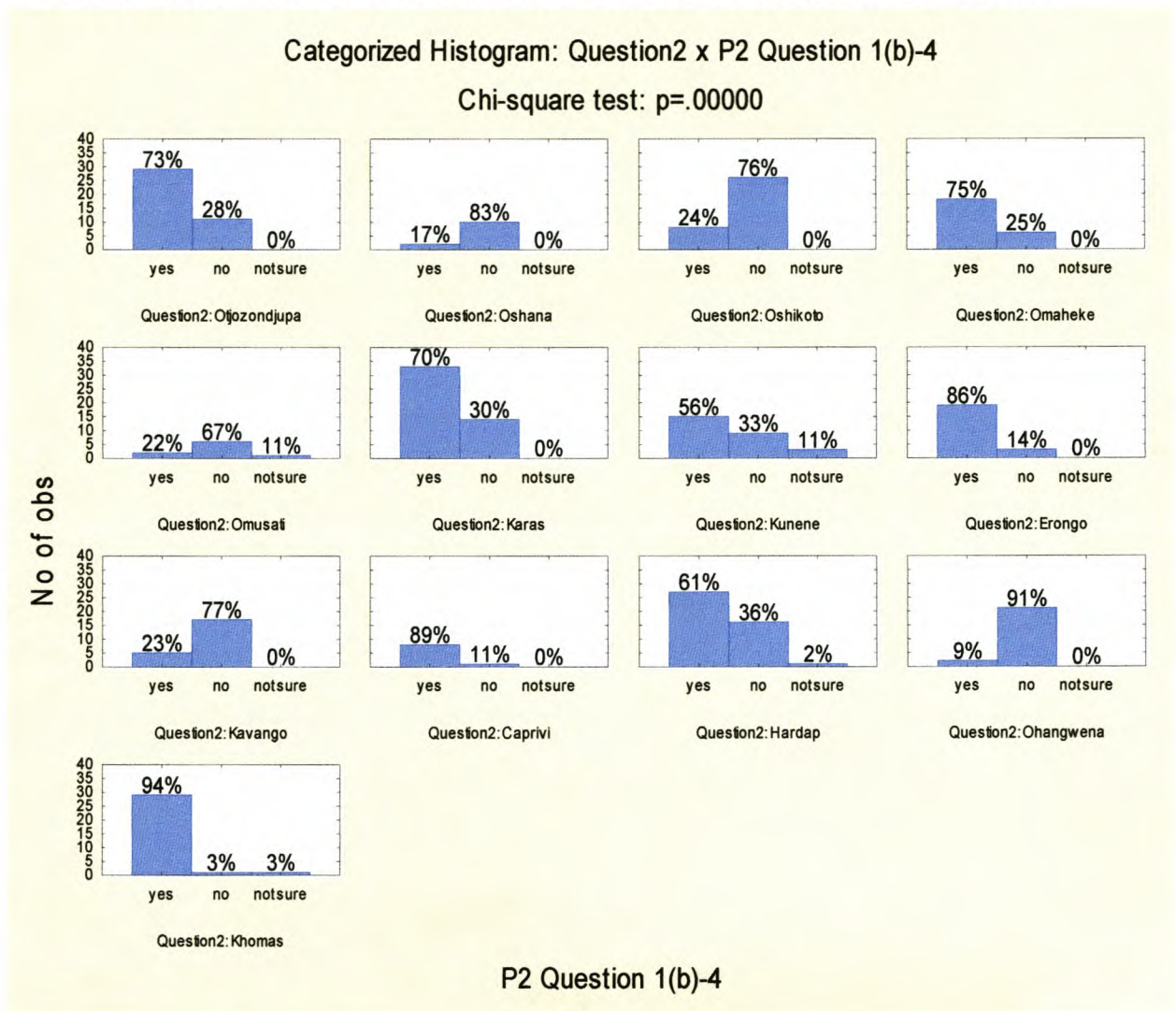
More toilets in urban areas are supplied with hand-washing facilities compared to centres in rural areas. Figure 5.9 revealed that whereas, 48% of the teachers in rural areas indicated that they did not have hand-washing facilities in their toilets 81% of teachers in urban areas indicated they had hand-washing facilities in toilets in their centres.

FIGURE 5.9 TOILETS WITH HAND WASHING FACILITIES BY URBAN AND RURAL AREAS



When considering the regional differences, it is obvious that the northern regions are disadvantaged as far as hand-washing facilities are concerned. The majority of respondents from the Ohangwena region, 91% indicated that their toilets did not have hand-washing facilities followed by Oshana with 83% and Kavango with 77% (see Figure 5.10).

FIGURE 5.10 TOILETS WITH HAND WASHING FACILITIES BY REGION

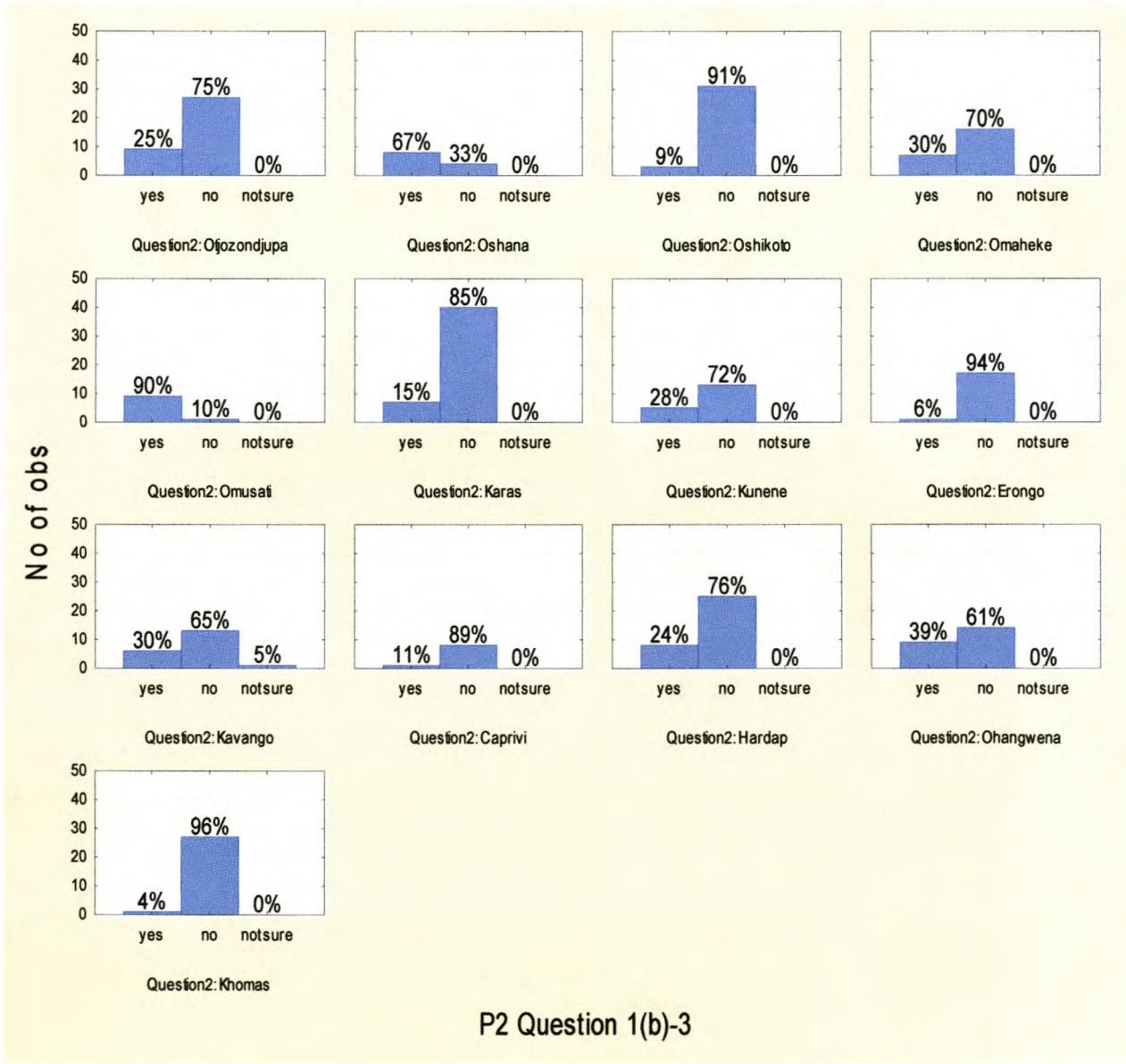


This is equally the case with regard to the provision of soap for children to wash their hands. More teachers in urban areas, 73%, indicated that toilets in their centres are supplied with soap, while only 33% of teachers in rural areas indicated the same. The majority of teachers in rural areas (64%) indicated that no soap was provided in their toilets with only 3% of the teachers not being sure.

5.3.4 Type of Toilet at the Centre

The majority of respondents who reported that they had pit toilets at the ECD Centre are found in the Omusati region 91% of the respondents indicated that their toilets are pit, followed by Oshana with 67%, Ohangwena with 39%, and Kavango and Omaheke regions with 30%, respectively.

FIGURE 5.11 TYPE OF TOILET AT THE CENTRE BY REGION



5.3.5 Availability of Water at the Centre

The supply of water to toilets will certainly go along with the availability of water at the centres. The regions, which indicated that they do not have adequate functional toilet facilities, are the ones who reported that they do not have regular water supply at the centre. For example, 70% respondents from the Kavango region indicated that they do not have a regular water supply at the centres. Urban regions portrayed a different image compared to rural regions. At least, 95% of early childhood education centres have regular water supply in the Khomas region, with 95% in the Erongo region and 91% in the Hardap region. However, 4% of the total urban population do not have a regular water supply compared to 56% of the rural population.

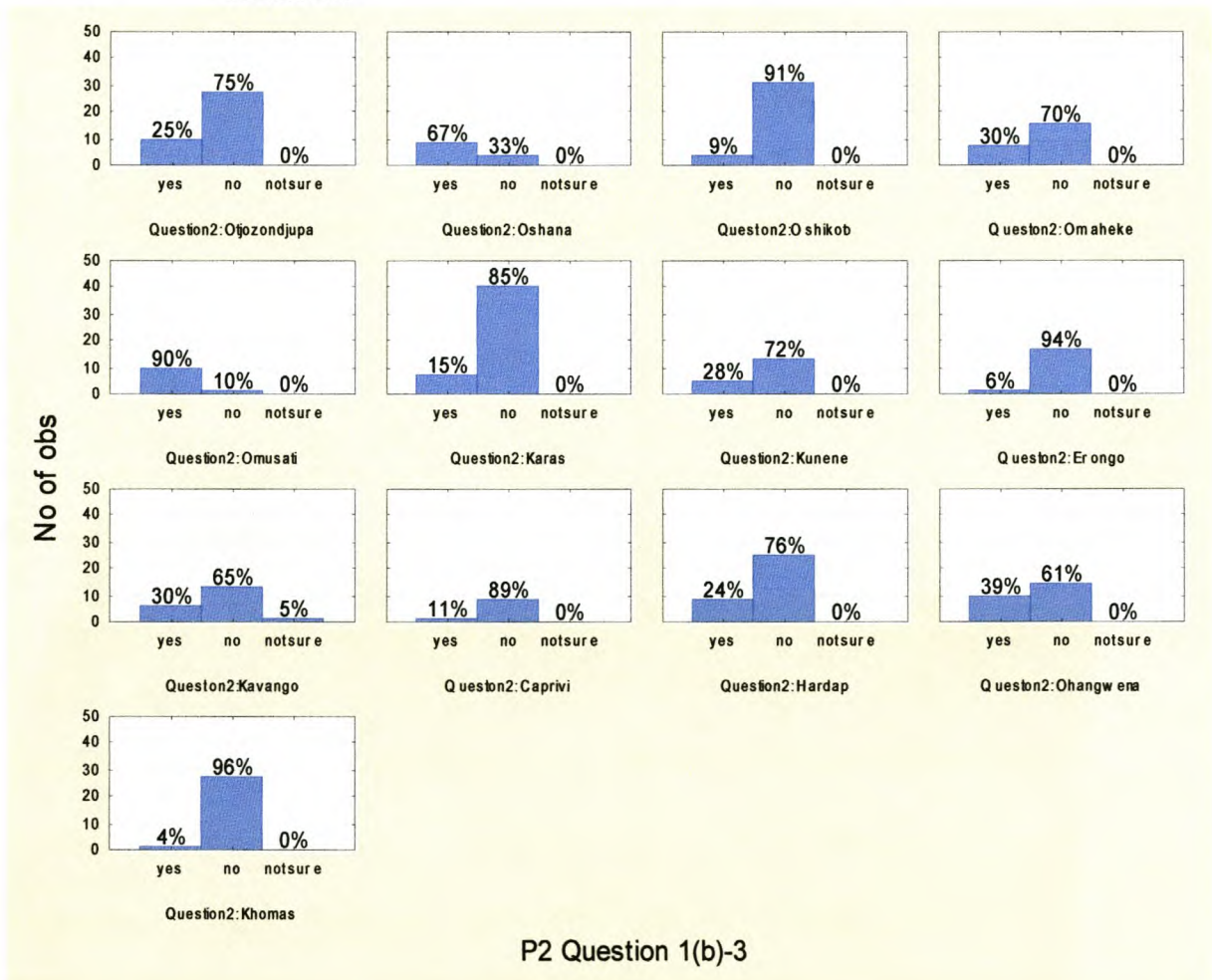
On the question of whether the water at the centres was safe, 71% of respondents from the Kavango region indicated that they do not have a safe water supply followed by Omusati region with 66%, Ohangwena region 56%, Oshikoto with 49% and Oshana regions with 41%, respectively. Khomas region had the highest percentage of respondents who indicated that their centres have a safe water supply (97%), followed by Otjozondjupa with 94% and Hardap and Omaheke with 93%. Of those respondents who were not sure, 7% of them are from the Omusati and 2% from the Otjozondjupa region. In total, 97% of the respondents from urban centres receive safe water supply at their early childhood education centres with only 59% of the respondents from rural areas.

5.3.6 Adequate Space at the Centre

As clearly indicated in a number of studies, children need adequate space to play and grow in and for education to be inclusive for all children, irrespective of their abilities, schools should cater for the physical needs of all children. The question intended to obtain information on the adequate space in early childhood education centres.

The majority of the respondents in all regions indicated that their classrooms have adequate space for each child to learn as well as enough space for children to play. The majority of respondents from the Khomas and the Ohangwena regions, 93% and 94%, respectively, indicated that their centres have adequate play areas (see Figure 5.12).

FIGURE 5.12 ADEQUATE SPACE AT EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRE BY REGION

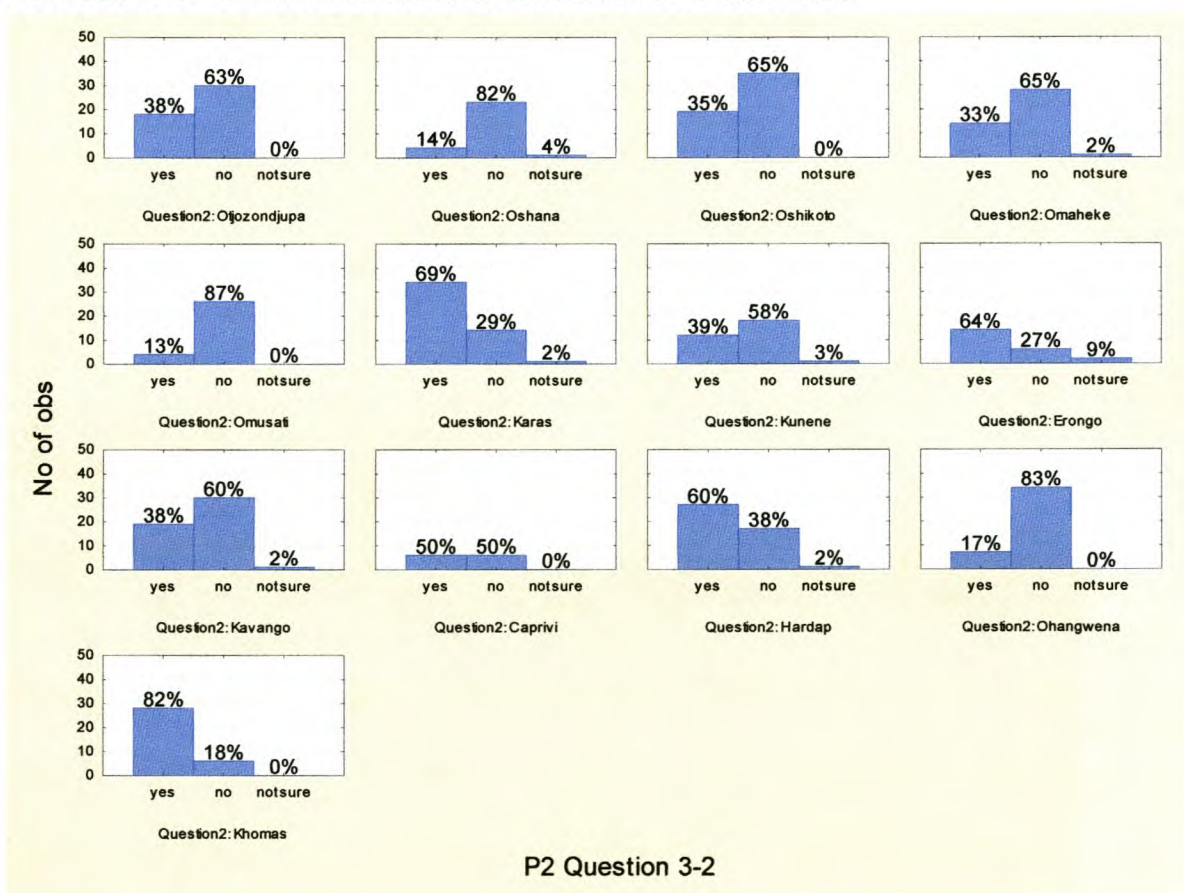


5.3.7 Comfortable Furniture

A different picture was provided with regard to comfortable furniture in the classroom. The results concerning the respondents without comfortable furniture

in their classrooms indicate that 87% of the respondents from Omusati region do not have comfortable furniture in their classrooms (see figure 5.13). A total of 82% of the respondents from the Khomas region and 50% from the Caprivi region indicated that they have comfortable furniture in their classrooms. It is however, clear from the data received that none of the centres have moved towards the provision of inclusive early childhood education to children with physical disabilities (see Figure 5.13).

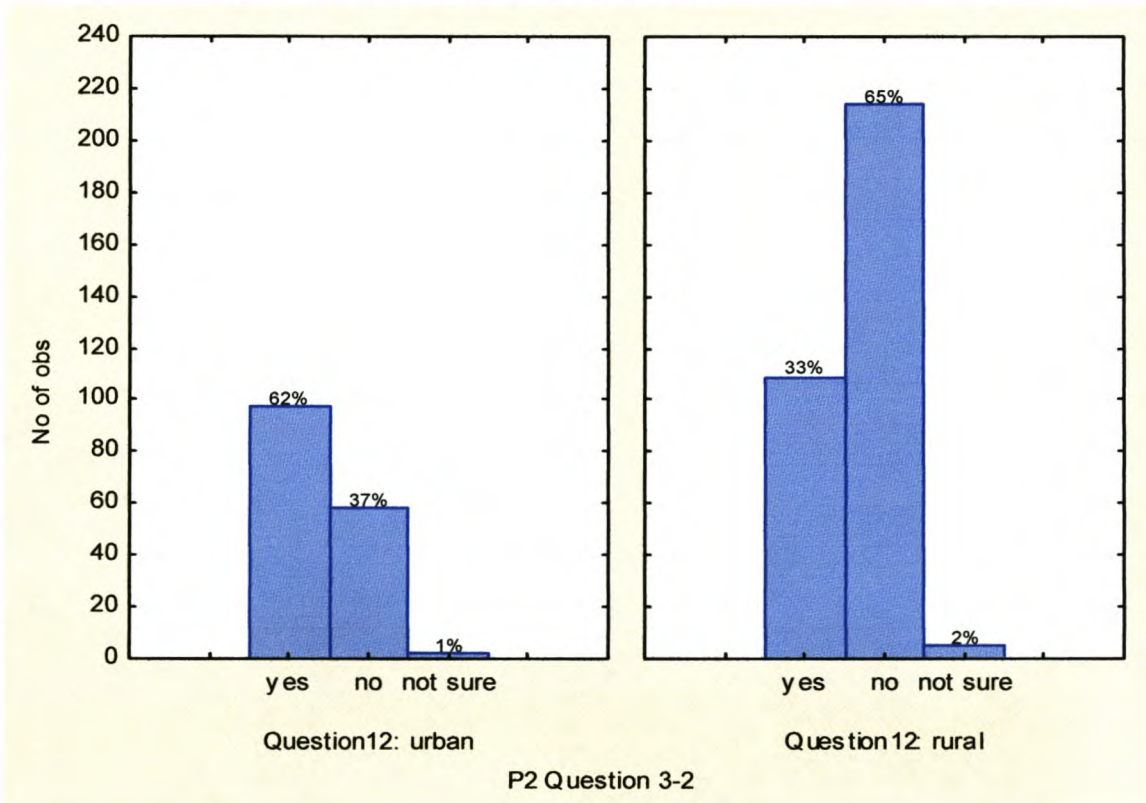
FIGURE 5.13 COMFORTABLE FURNITURE BY REGION



There are glaring disparities with regard to the provision of furniture in early childhood education centres in Namibia. The majority of rural schools are not provided with comfortable furniture compared to schools in the urban centres. While 65% of respondents from rural schools indicated that their centres do not

have comfortable furniture while almost the same number of respondents from urban schools (64%) indicated that their centres are provided with comfortable furniture for their children (see Figure 5.14).

FIGURE 5.14 FURNITURE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CENTRES BY RURAL AND URBAN AREA

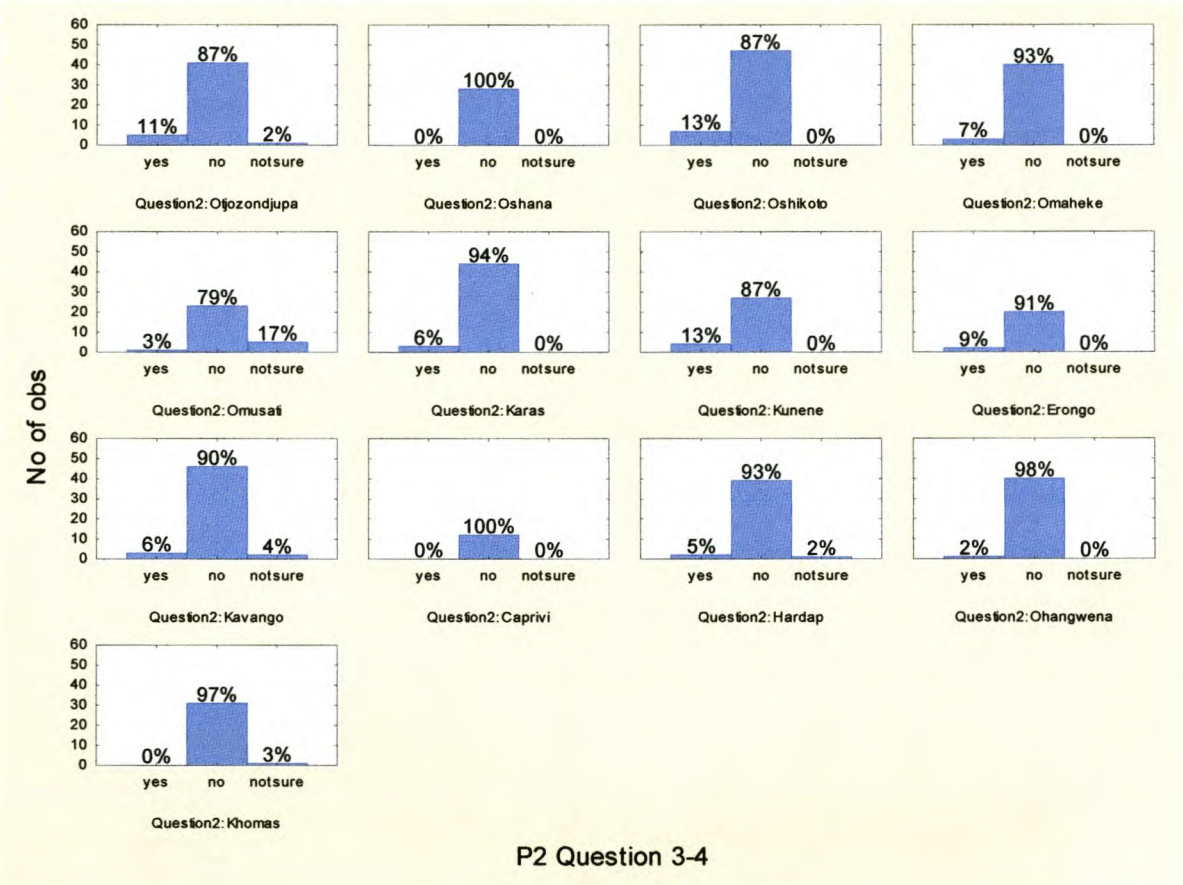


5.3.8 Ramps for Children with Physical Disabilities

Of all the respondents, 100% of the respondents from Caprivi and Oshana indicated that they do not have ramps for children with physical disabilities in their centres. One would have expected to find such facilities, at least, in urban areas. However, the situation is also the same in urban areas with a total of 97% of the centres in the Khomas region (see Figure 5.15). Only 13% of respondents from the Oshikoto and Kunene regions and 6% from Kavango and Karas regions

indicated that they have ramps for children with physical disabilities in their centres.

FIGURE 5.15 RAMPs FOR CHILDREN WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES BY REGION



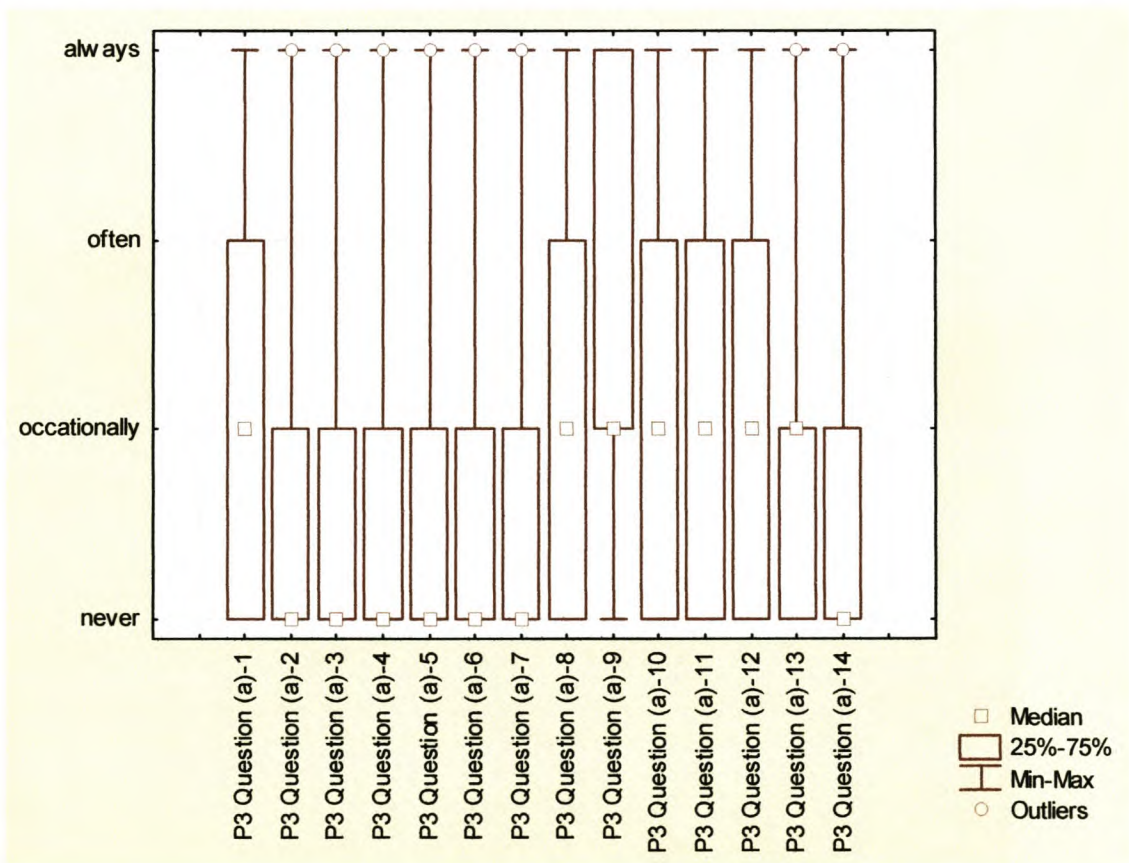
5.4 BARRIERS ENCOUNTERED AT EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT CENTRES

This section consisted of several questions to establish whether ECD providers were aware of any health related barriers that may be experienced by children in their centres. It was particularly important in determining the knowledge and level of educators' with regard to the provisions of an inclusive approach to ECD in Namibia.

5.4.1 Special Needs Identified

Concerning the type of educational problems encountered at the early childhood centres in Namibia, Figure 5.16 revealed that children were **always** seeking attention. Problems that were **often** encountered with children included in early childhood education centres were emotional behaviours, learning difficulties, physical attacks and children who are withdrawn. However, some revealed that HIV and AIDS, poor vision, lack of hearing and limited speech are **occasionally** encountered in early childhood education centres in Namibia.

FIGURE 5.16 EDUCATION PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED AT ECD CENTRES



5.4.3 Neglect

The Kavango region also indicated an average of over 2.5 boys per respondent having some educational problems due to neglect and an average number of 5 girls per respondent who dropped out of ECD centres because of neglect. Lozi speakers had an average number of two girls per respondent who dropped out of ECD centres due to neglect (see Figures 5.18 and 5.19).

FIGURE 5.18 BOYS WITH PROBLEMS DUE TO NEGLECT BY REGION

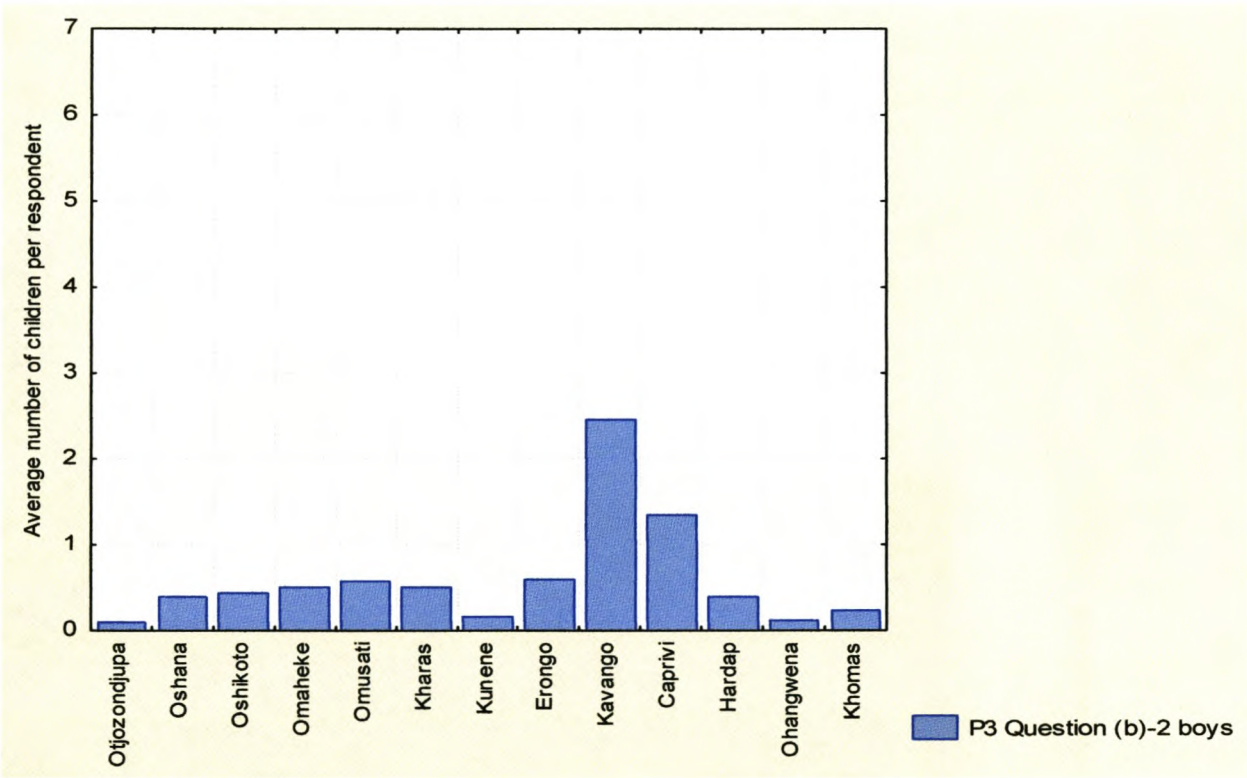
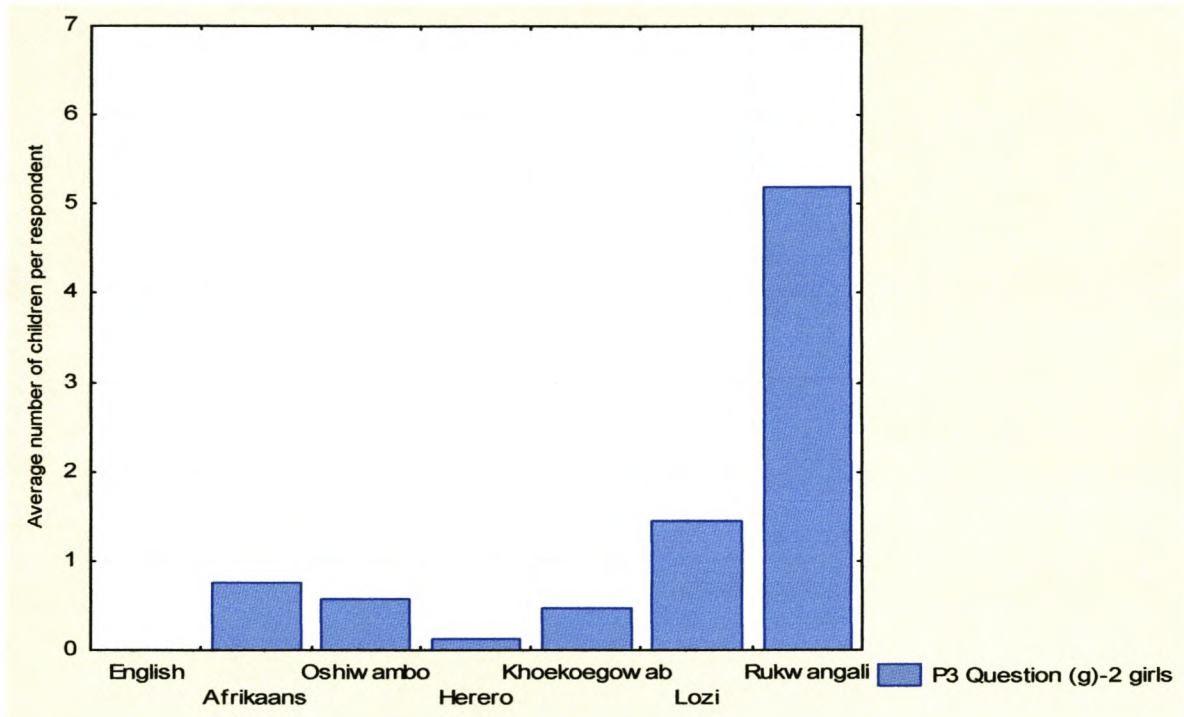


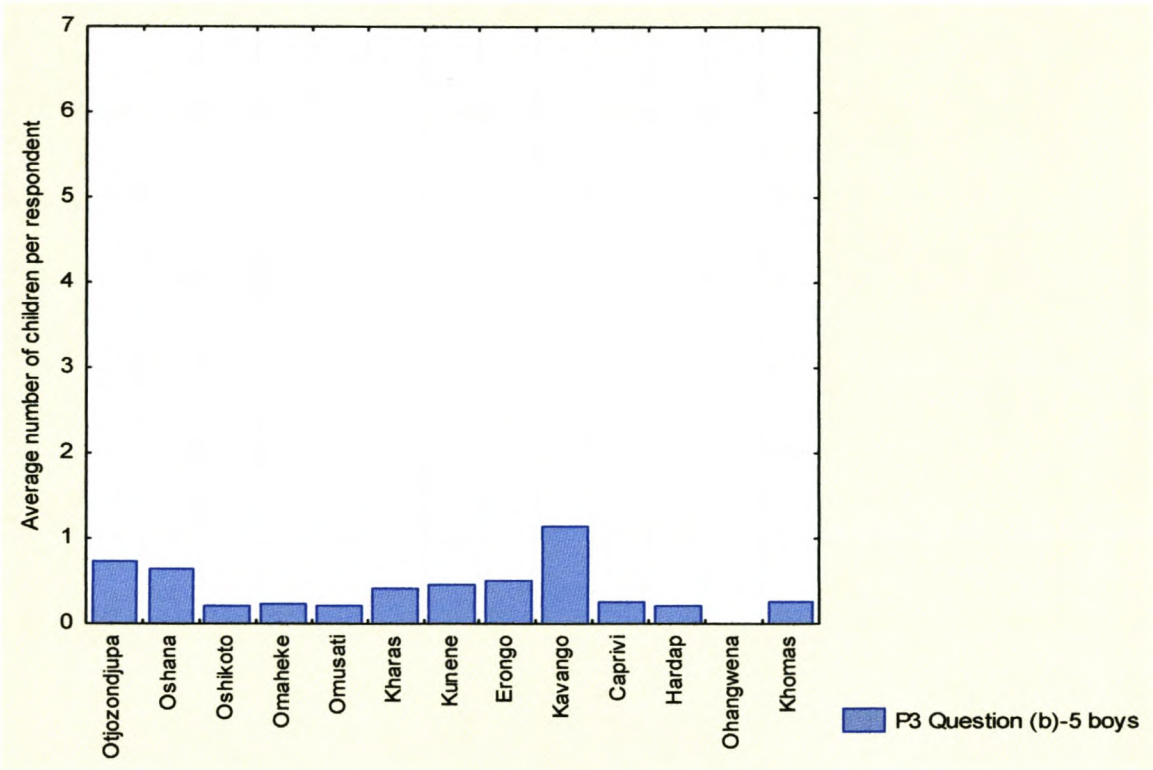
FIGURE 5.19 GIRLS PER LANGUAGE GROUP NOT ATTENDING ECD CENTRES DUE TO NEGLECT



5.4.4 Physical Illness

According to the respondents in Figure 5.20, the Kavango region had, at least, one boy per respondent with a physical illness in the classroom, while the Ohangwena region did not have any boys with a physical illness in their classrooms.

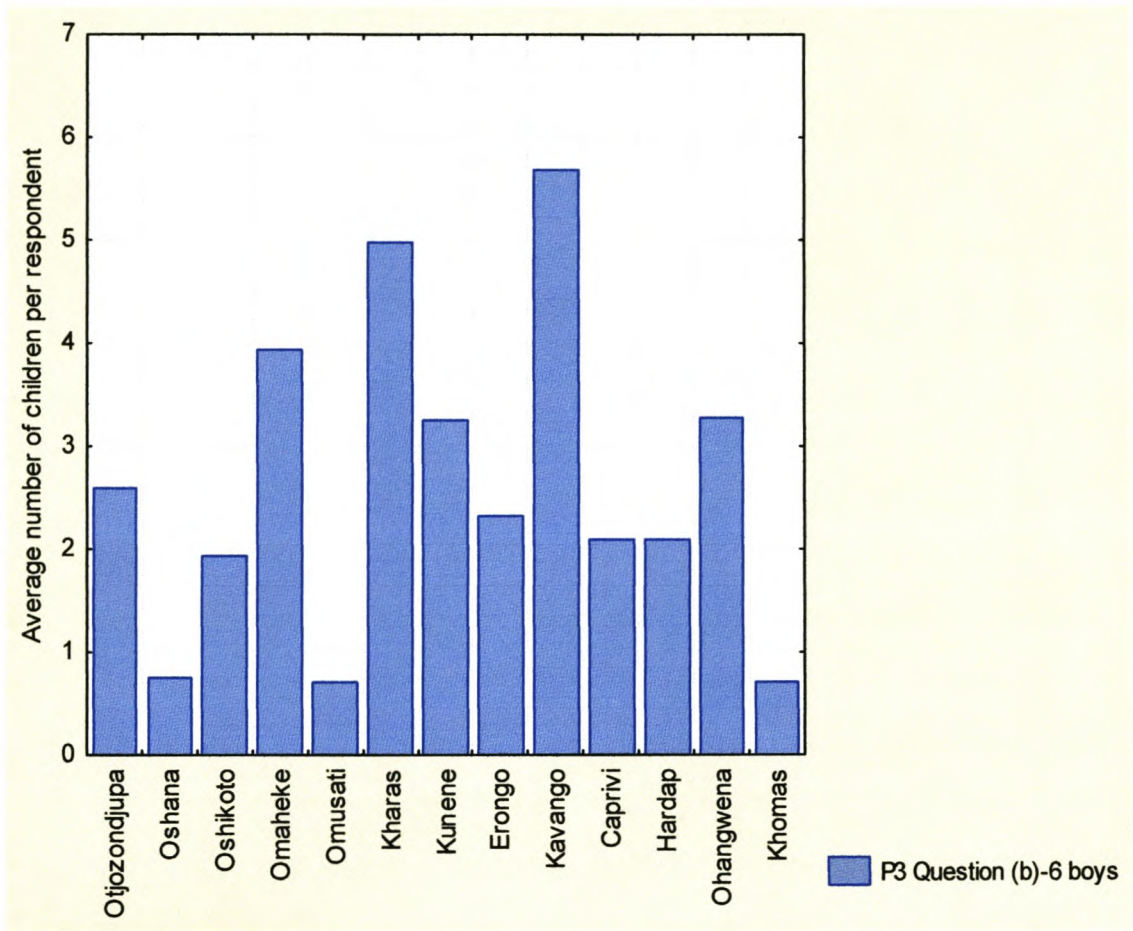
FIGURE 5.20 BOYS WITH PHYSICAL ILLNESS ACCORDING TO REGION



5.4.5 Poverty

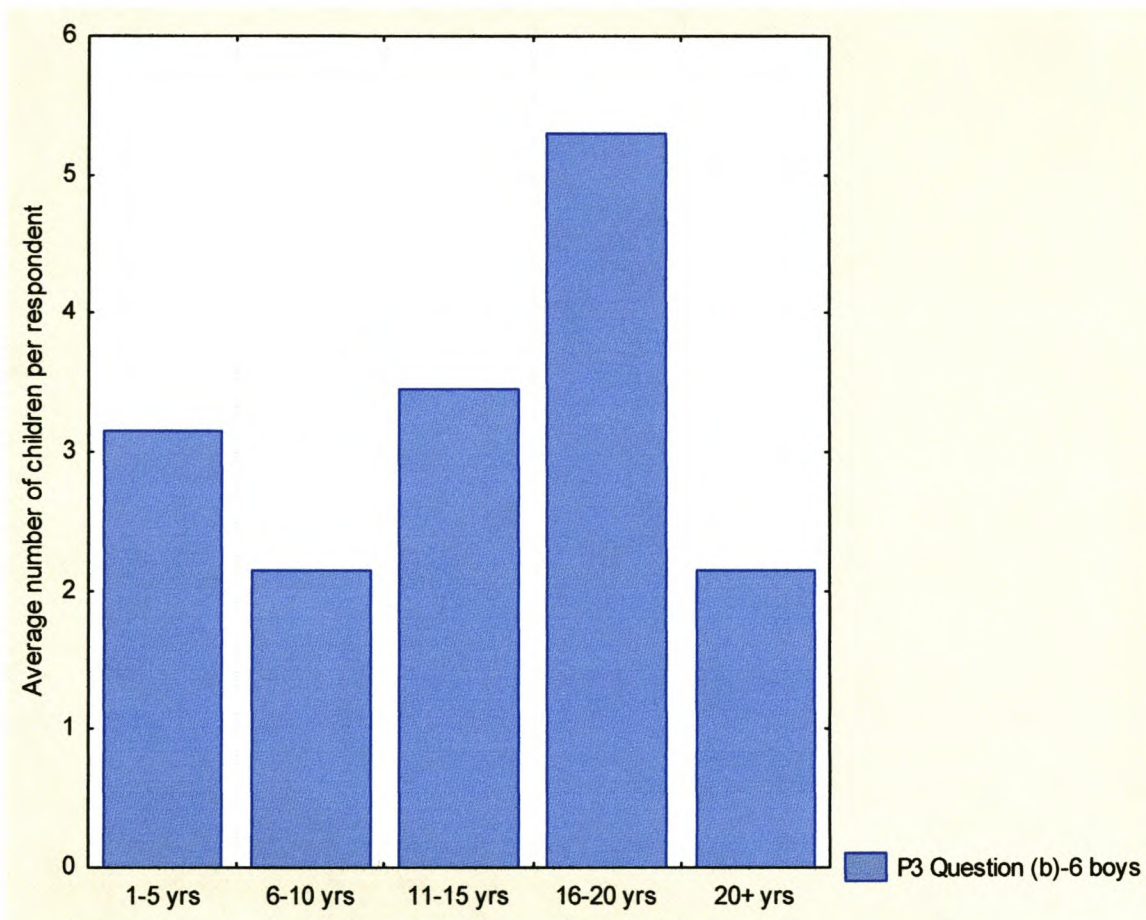
The question was specifically asked in order to confirm the researcher’s assumption that poverty was a cause of many children’s not benefiting from any kind of early childhood education in Namibia. An average number of 5.7 boys per respondent in the Kavango region lived under conditions of poverty compared to almost no boy in the Khomas, Omusati and Oshana regions (see Figure 5.21).

FIGURE 5.21 BOYS WHO LIVE IN POVERTY BY REGION



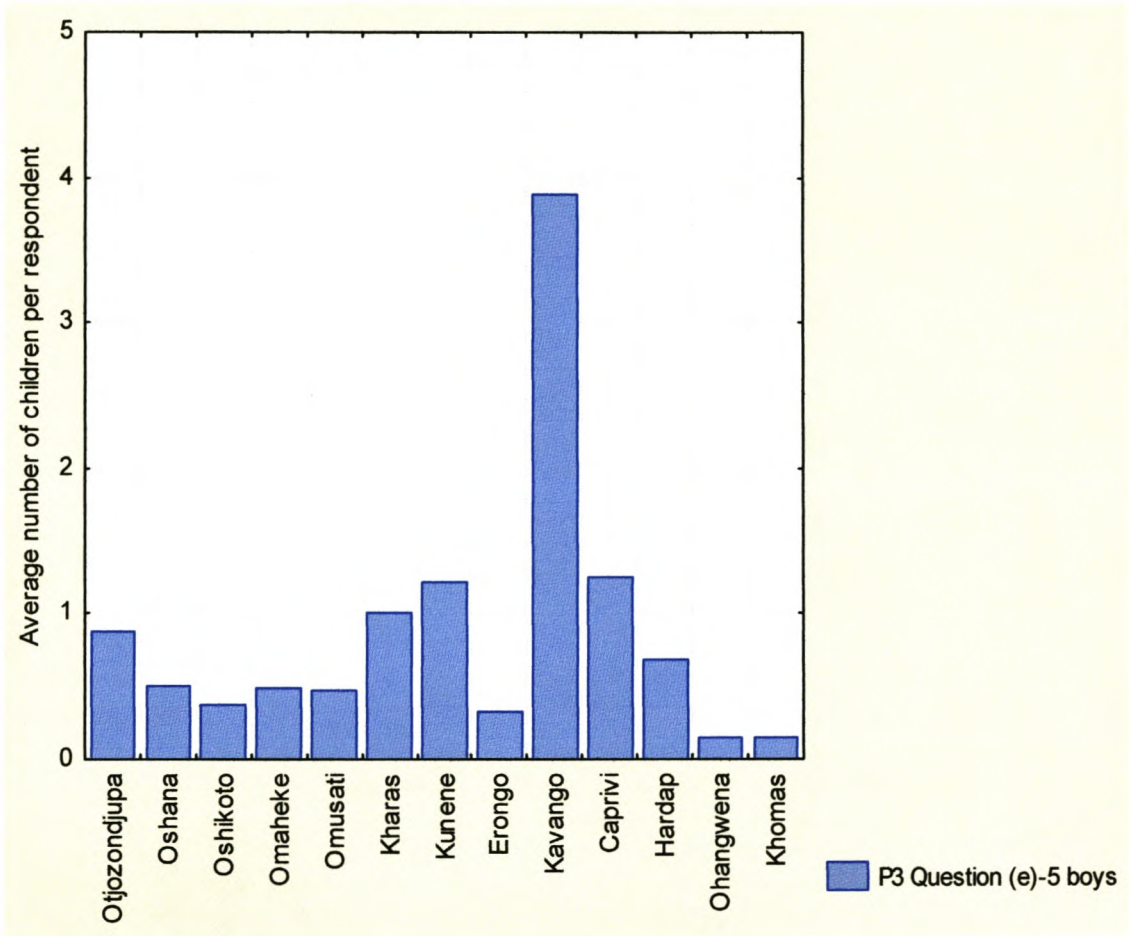
The situation was the same for girls who lived in poverty in the Kavango region. Figure 5.22 revealed that an average number of 6.2 girls per respondent lived in poverty compared to an average of five girls in the Karas region.

FIGURE 5.23 RESPONDENTS BY TEACHING EXPERIENCE INDICATING NUMBER OF BOYS WHO LIVE IN POVERTY



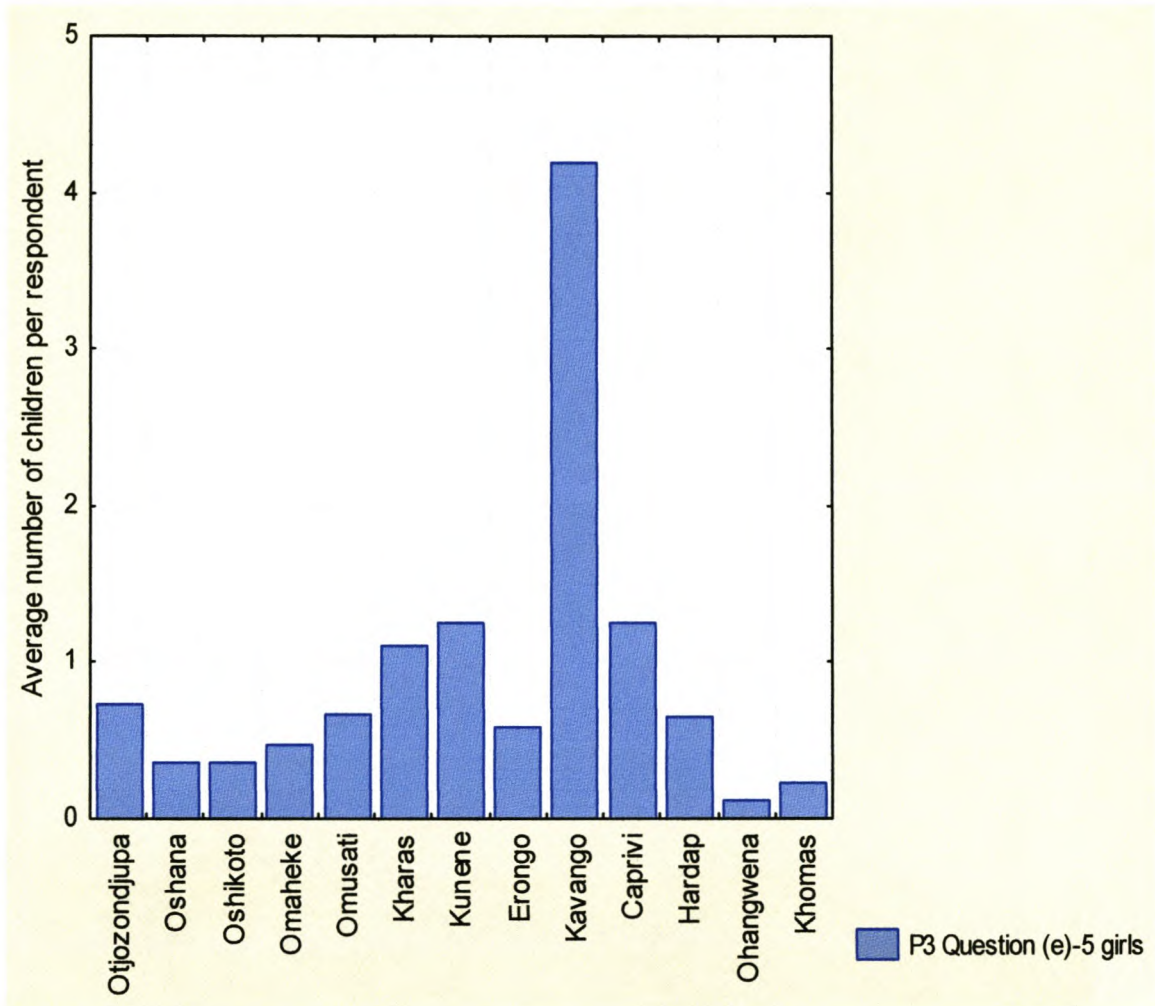
Poverty has been identified as a contributing factor to dropping out of ECD centres in the Kavango region. Figure 5.24 indicates that close to an average number of five boys per respondent dropped out of ECD centres due to poverty.

FIGURE 5.24 RESPONDENTS BY REGION INDICATING NUMBER OF BOYS WHO LIVE IN POVERTY



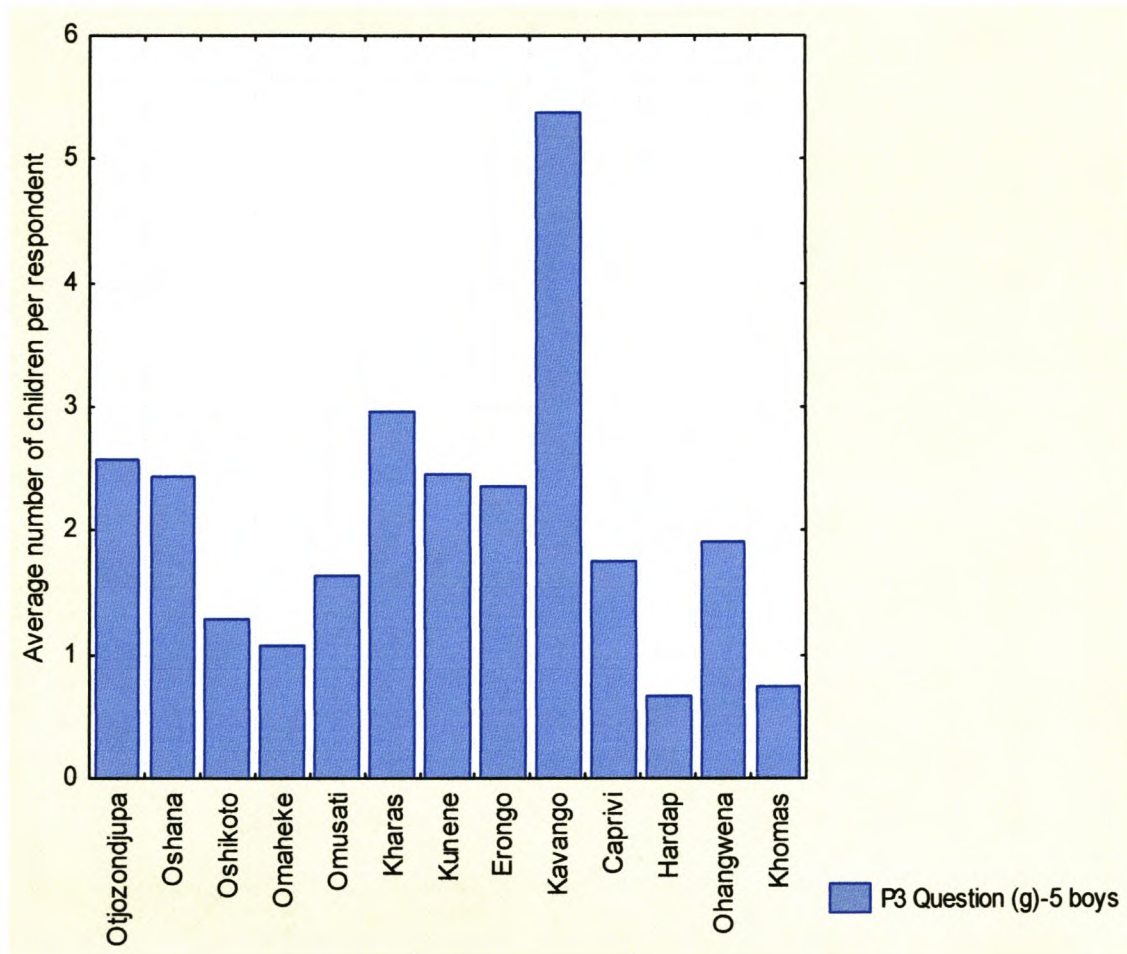
An average of one girl per respondent dropped out of the ECD centres in the Khomas and Ohangwena regions due to poverty, compared to over four girls in the Kavango region (see Figure 5.25).

FIGURE 5.25 RESPONDENTS BY REGION INDICATING NUMBER OF GIRLS WHO DROPPED OUT DUE TO POVERTY



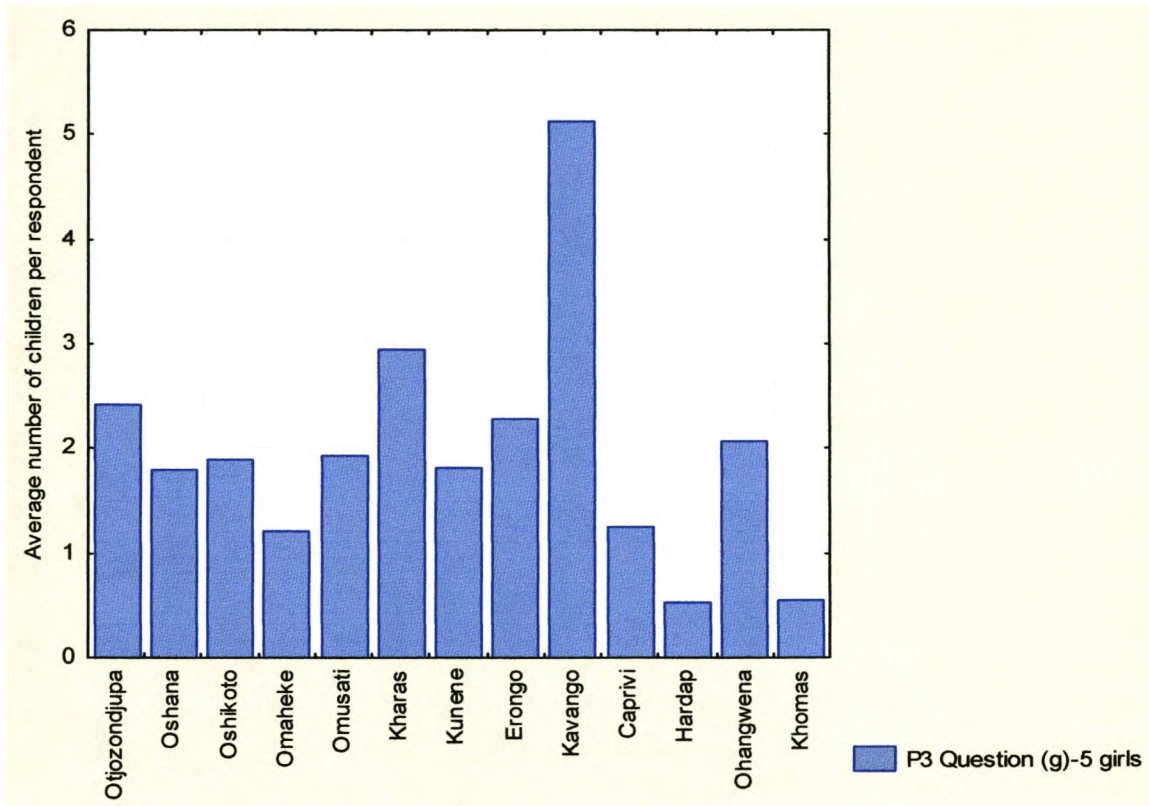
When the respondents were requested to indicate the reasons why children they considered as having special needs did not attend ECD centres, the majority indicated poverty as the cause. The Kavango and Karas regions came out as the region most affected by poverty in this regard with more than an average of 5 and 3 boys per respondent, respectively, having being identified as not benefiting from any kind of ECD due to poverty (see Figure 5.26).

FIGURE 5.26 RESPONDENTS BY REGION WHO INDICATED NUMBER OF BOYS NOT ATTENDING DUE TO POVERTY



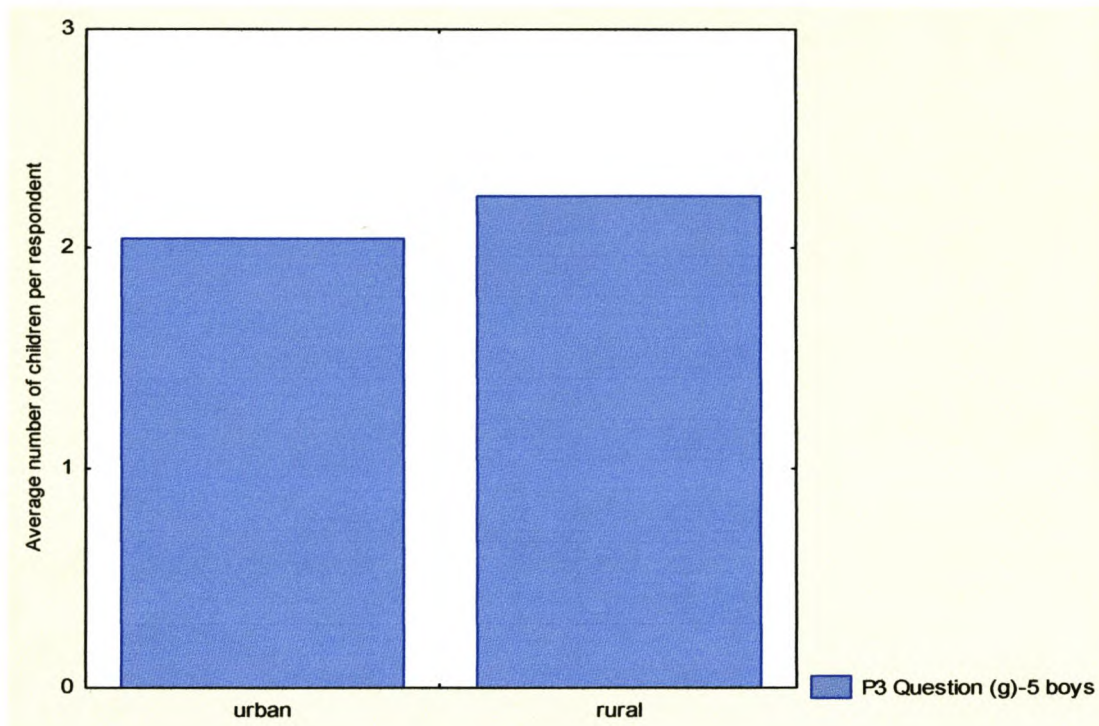
A similar trend was also experienced with regard to the average number of girls not attending early childhood education because of poverty (see Figure 5.27).

FIGURE 5.27 RESPONDENTS BY REGIONS WHO INDICATED NUMBER OF GIRLS NOT ATTENDING DUE TO POVERTY



Poverty seems to affect people in rural and urban areas equally. An average of two boys per respondent did not attend early childhood education in urban areas, and slightly above 2.3 in rural areas (see Figure 5.28).

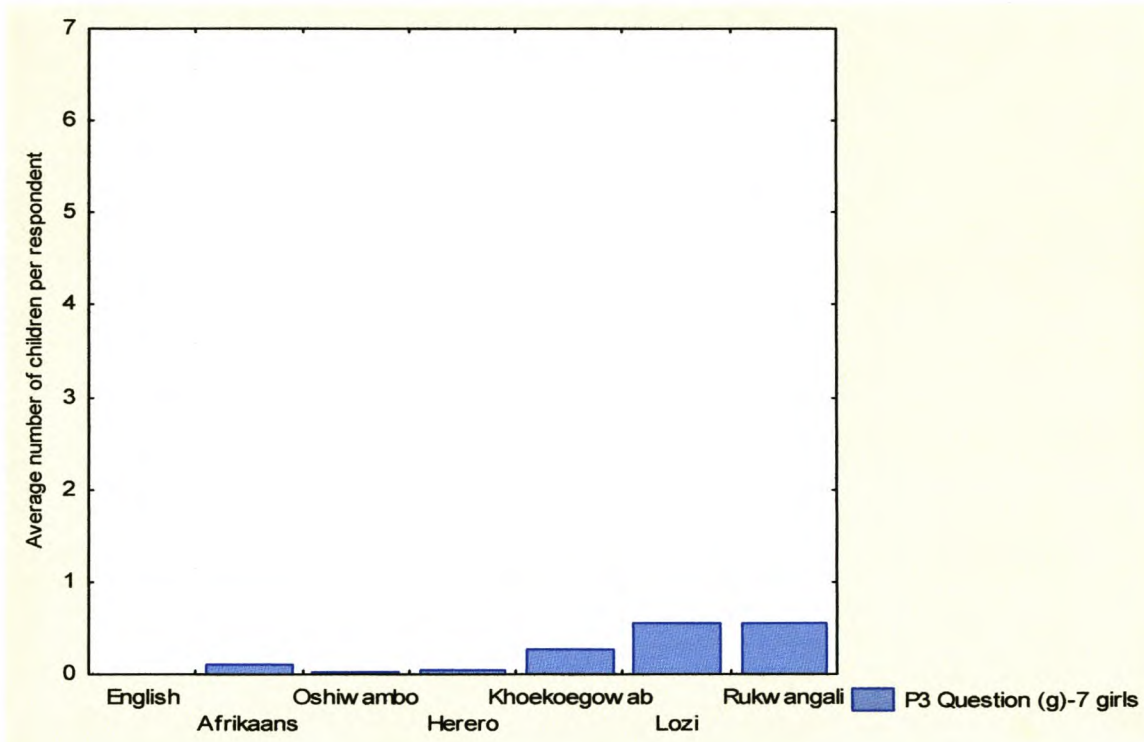
FIGURE 5.28 RESPONDENTS BY RURAL AND URBAN AREAS WHO INDICATED BOYS NOT ATTENDING DUE TO POVERTY



5.4.6 Disability

Obtaining information on the knowledge of ECD educators with regard to their knowledge about children with disabilities could contribute to making informed decisions on the introduction of an inclusive approach to ECD in Namibia. Data revealed that not many children with disabilities were enrolled in early childhood education in Namibia. The Figure below (5.29) indicates that only Lozi and Rukwangali speakers indicated that they had an average 0.5 girls with disabilities in their classrooms.

FIGURE 5.29 RESPONDENTS BY REGION WHO INDICATED NUMBER OF GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES



5.5 CURRICULUM IN PLACE AT THE CENTRE

This section mainly concentrated on determining the ECD educators' knowledge of the National ECD Policy in Namibia, whether there was an ECD curriculum being implemented. In addition, it was important to determine their knowledge of support services provided by the various stakeholders such as the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture, Ministry of Women Affairs and Child Welfare, communities, churches and the private sector.

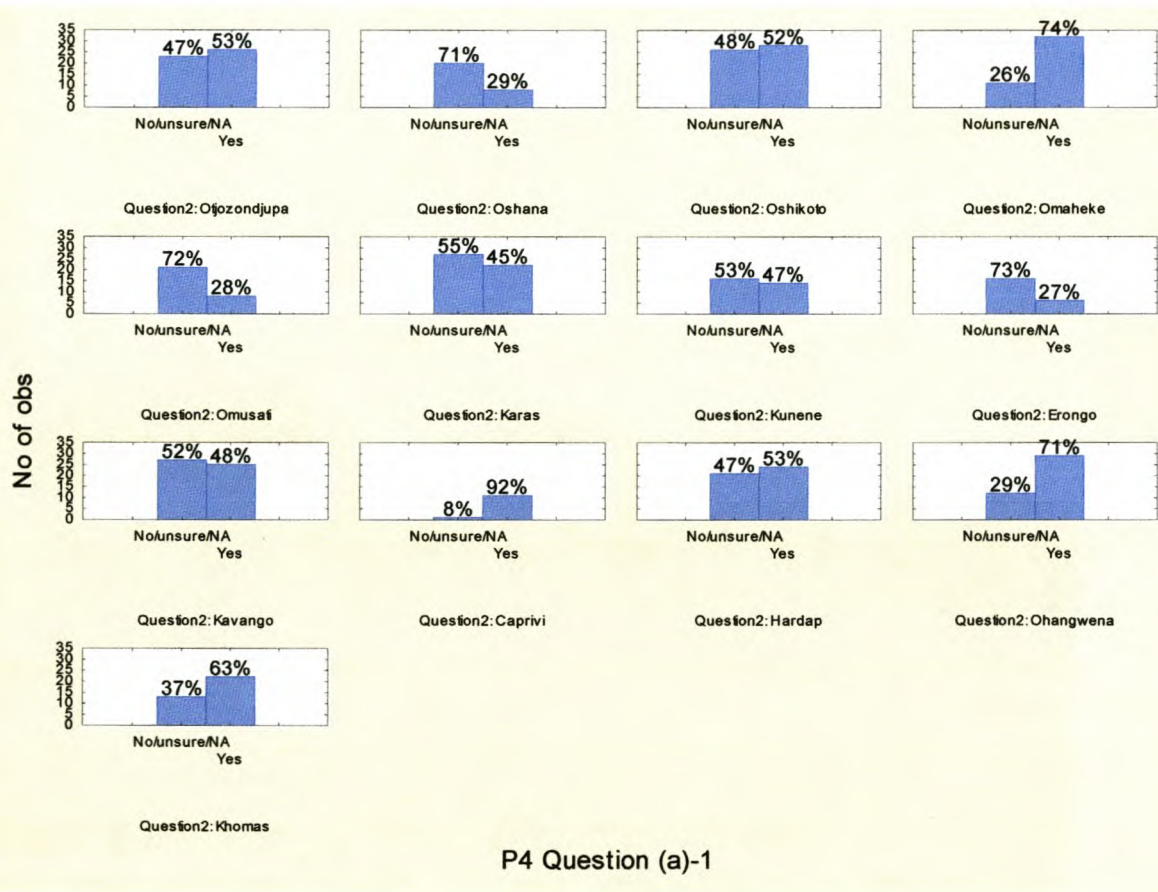
5.5.1 Early Childhood Education Policies

The following three questions, ranging from a scale of *yes*; *no*; *not sure* and *does not apply*, were asked in order to determine the respondents' knowledge about

any policies in place:

1. Are you aware of an official Early Childhood Development Policy in Namibia?
2. Does your Centre have a specific policy that addresses the development of children?
3. Are you aware of current policies that address the special needs of all learners in educational settings?

FIGURE 5.30 KNOWLEDGE OF THE NATIONAL POLICY ON ECD BY REGION

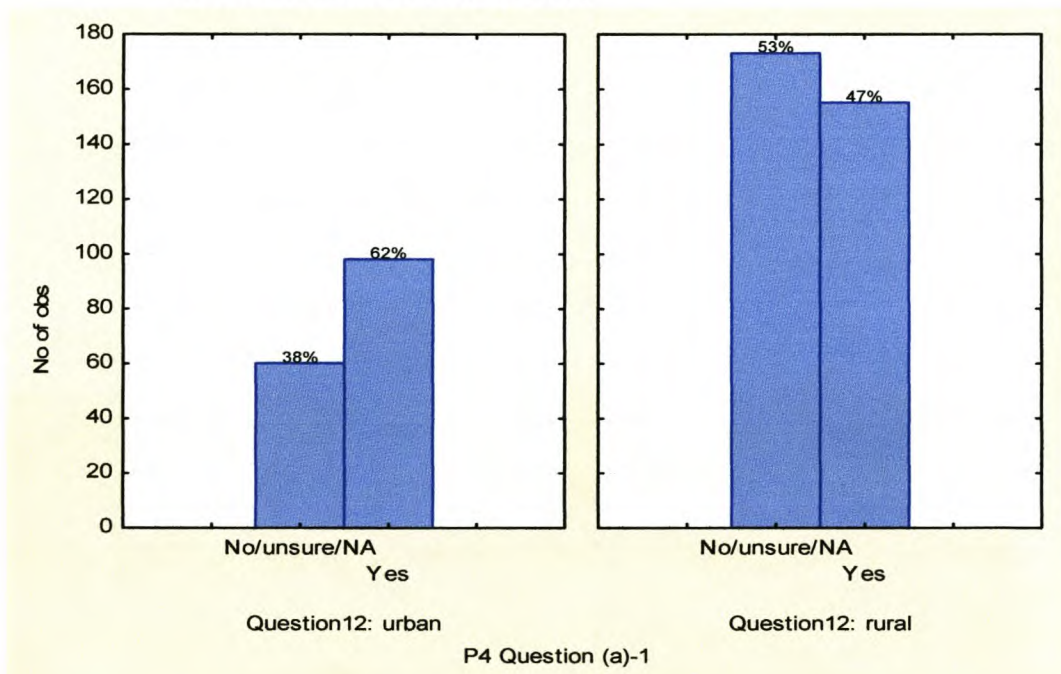


According to Figure 5.30 above, there were some regional variations with regard to knowledge about the ECD Policy in Namibia. The majority of respondents from the Oshana (71%), Omusati (72%) and Erongo (73%) regions were not aware of the National Early Childhood Development Policy in Namibia. One would have

assumed that more respondents from the Khomas region, which includes the capital city Windhoek and is considered the region where information is freely available, would be aware of the National Early Childhood Development Policy. However, as much as 37% of the respondents indicated their lack of knowledge of the Early Childhood Development Policy.

Figure 5.31 confirmed that there was a lack of flow of information between urban and rural areas, While 62% of the respondents from the urban areas revealed that they were aware of the National Early Childhood Development Policy, 53% of the respondents from rural areas were not aware of such a policy.

FIGURE 5.31 KNOWLEDGE OF THE NATIONAL POLICY ON ECD BY RURAL AND URBAN AREA



5.5.2 Policies Addressing the Development of Children at the Centre

The implementation of an effective early childhood education programme depends on the knowledge and level of implementation of the National Early

Childhood Development Policy. Knowledge about the National ECD Policy will have a significant impact on the success of the programmes being implemented in the ECD centres. There were regional variations about knowledge of specific policies addressing the development of children at the early childhood education centres. While 82% of the respondents from the Kavango Region and 71% from the Kunene regions indicated they were not aware of specific policies addressing early childhood development, 100% of the respondents from the Caprivi and 89% from the Oshikoto regions indicated that they were aware of such policies (see Figure 5.32).

FIGURE 5.32 KNOWLEDGE BY REGION OF THE SPECIFIC POLICY ADDRESSING THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN AT THE CENTRE

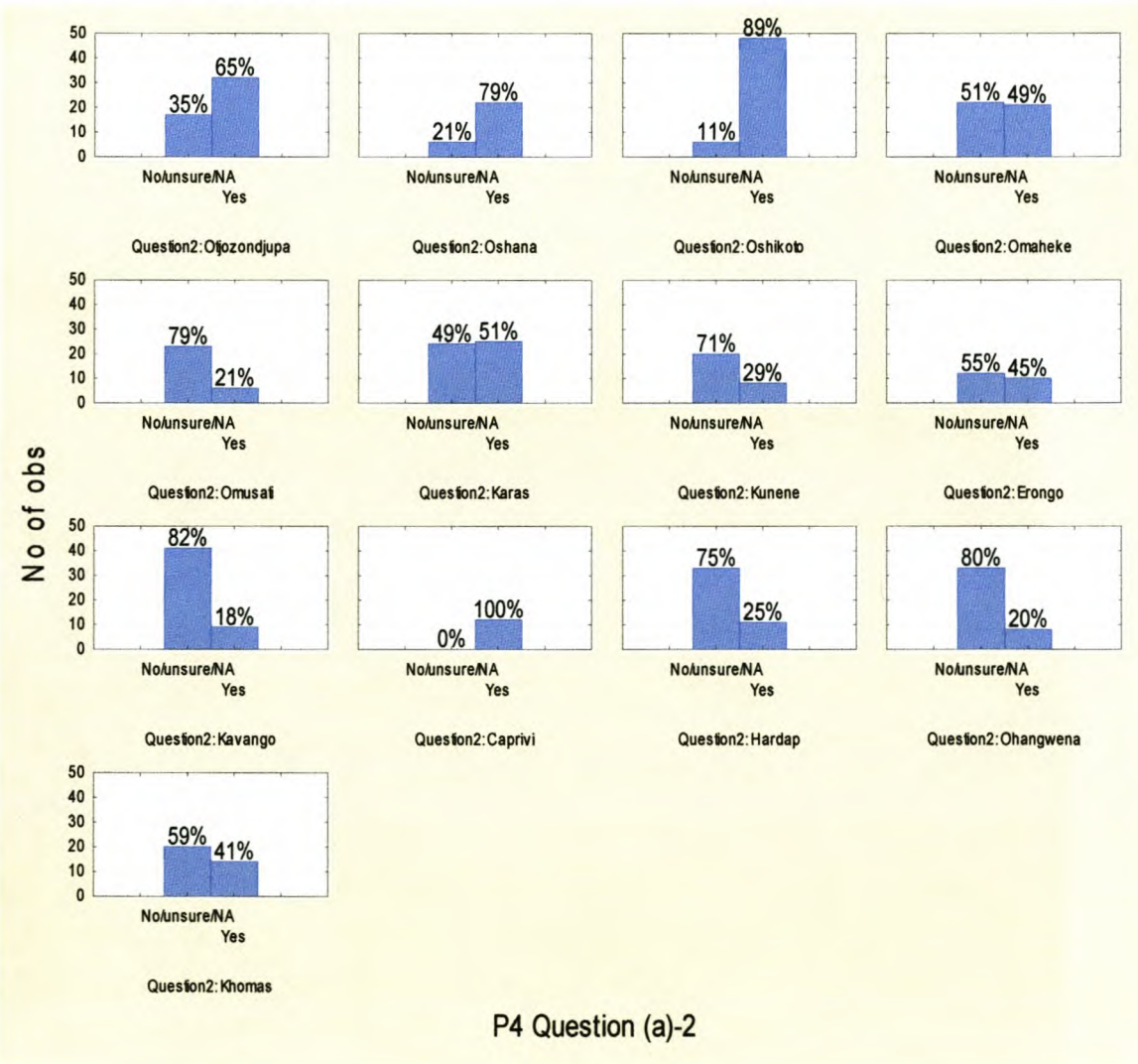
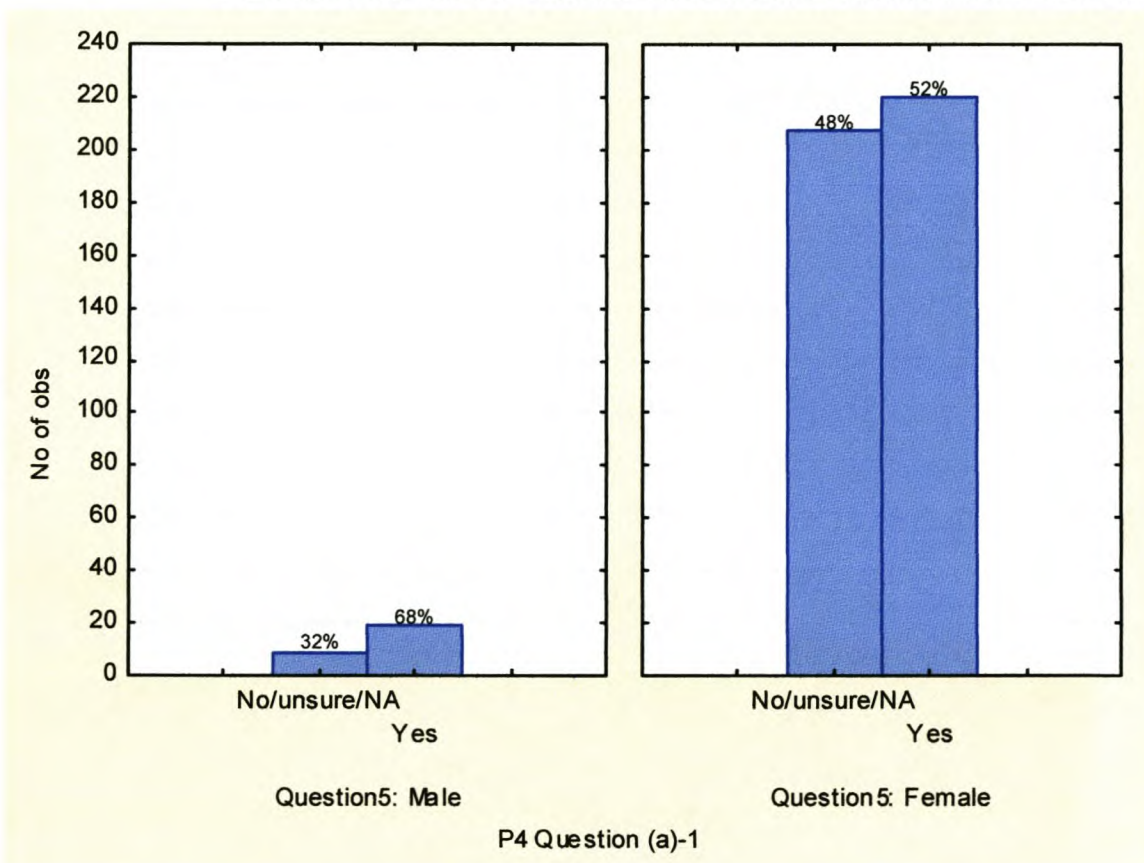


Figure 5.33 reveals that the gender variable did not influence the knowledge of ECD educators concerning the Early Childhood Policy. While only 52% of the female respondents confirmed that they know about the ECD Policy, 68% of male respondents confirmed that they know about the ECD Policy.

FIGURE 5.33 KNOWLEDGE OF THE SPECIFIC POLICY ADDRESSING THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN AT THE CENTRE BY GENDER



The age of the early childhood educator seems to have an influence on the knowledge of policies and curriculum in place. The majority of respondents (see Figure 5.34) in the younger age group revealed their ignorance with regard to specific policies addressing early childhood education in the different centres. In the age groups 18 to 25 and 26 to 35 years old, 70% and 60%, respectively were not aware of any such policies at the centres, compared to 79% of the respondents in the age group 56 to 60 years who were aware of such policies.

FIGURE 5.34 KNOWLEDGE OF THE SPECIFIC POLICY ADDRESSING THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN AT THE CENTRE BY AGE

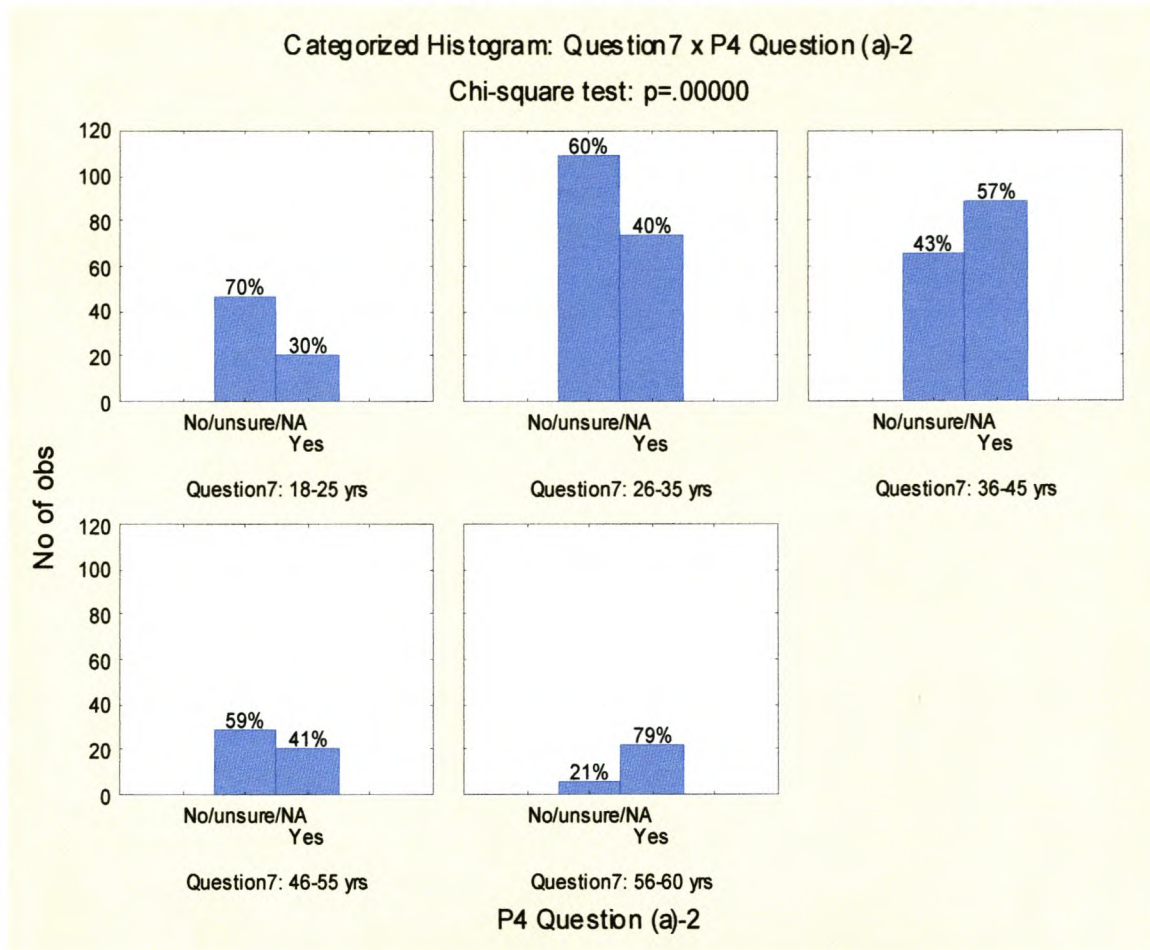
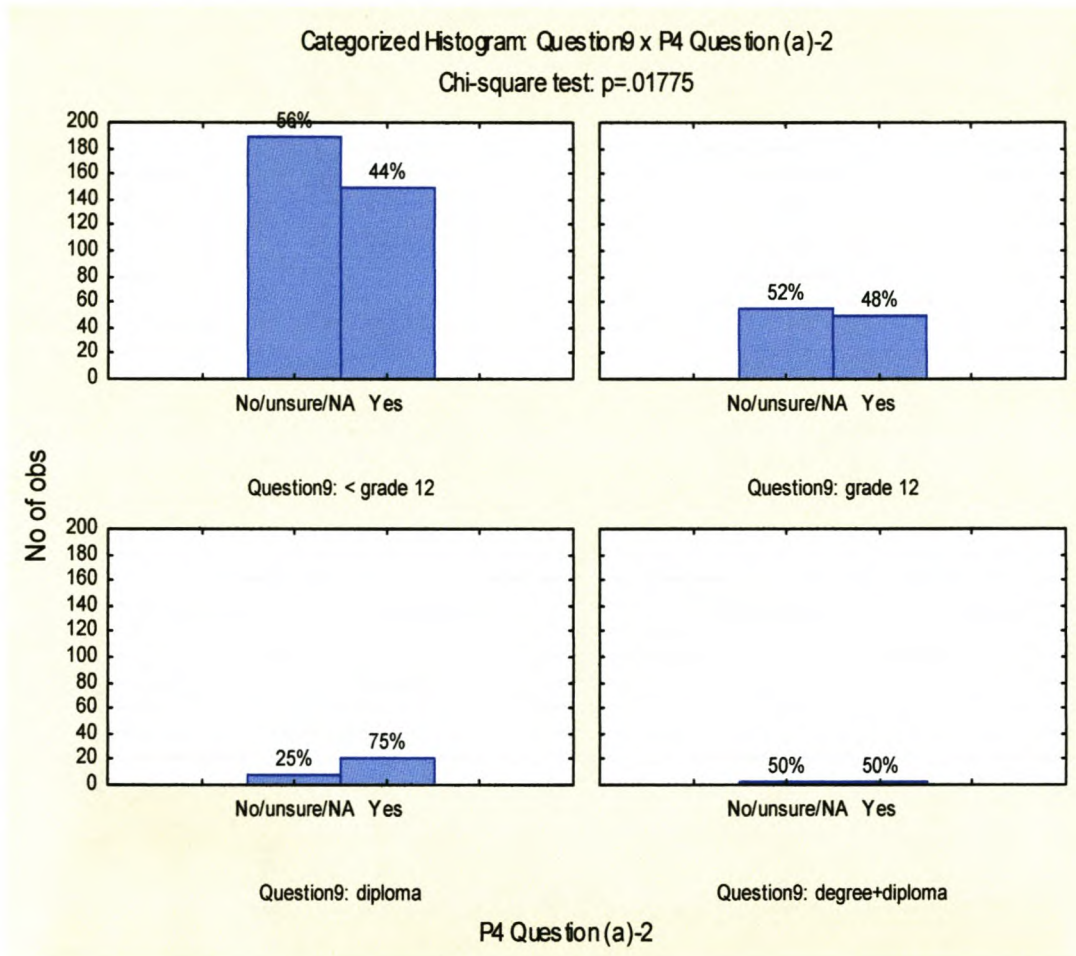


Figure 5.35 indicates that 75% of the teachers with a diploma revealed that they were aware of the policies at the centres on the development of children, compared to 56% of teachers with less than a grade 12 qualification who indicated that they were not aware of such policies at the centres.

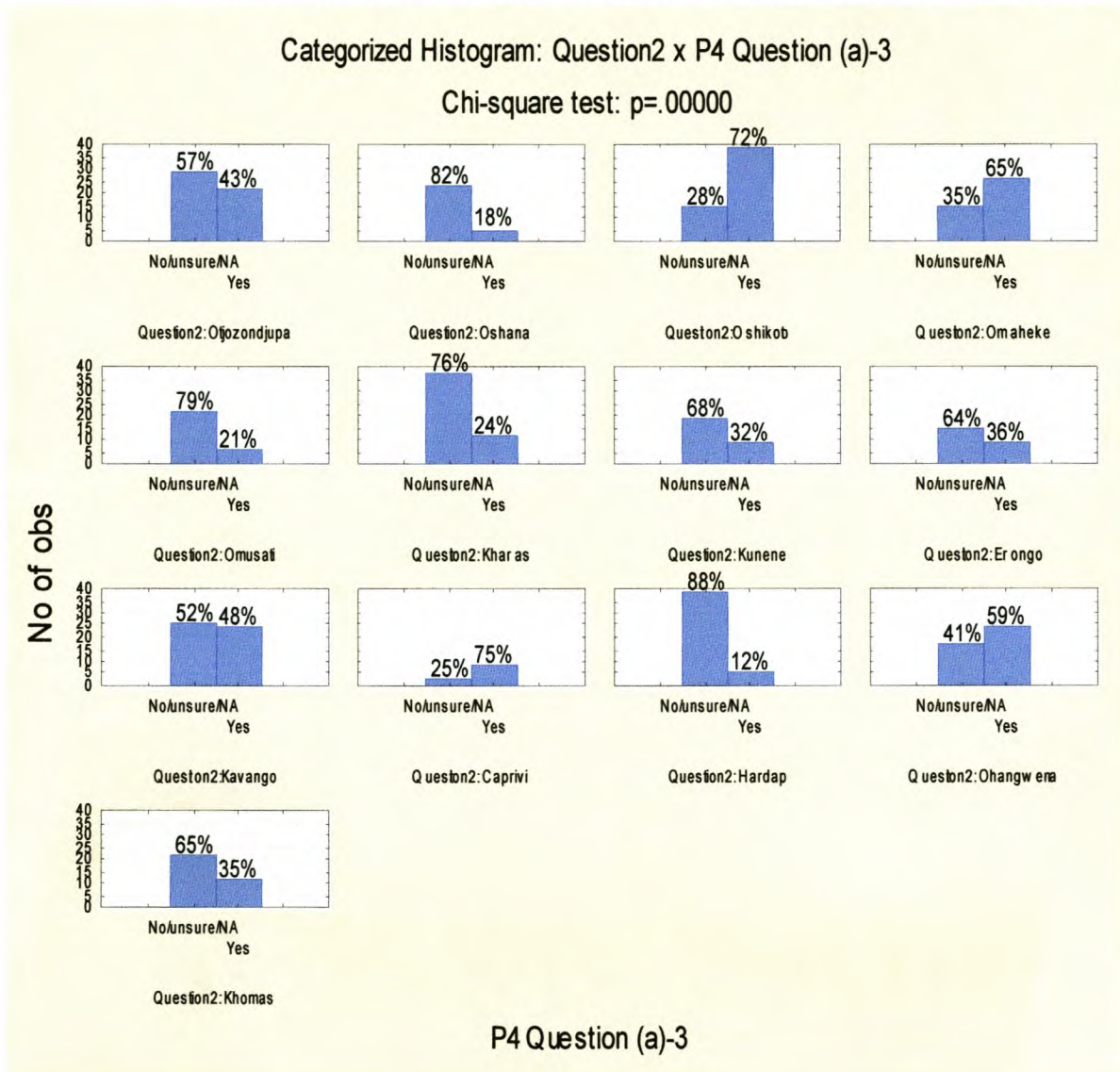
FIGURE 5.35 KNOWLEDGE OF THE SPECIFIC POLICY ADDRESSING THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN AT THE CENTRE BY QUALIFICATION



5.5.3 Policies Addressing the Special Needs of Learners in Educational Settings

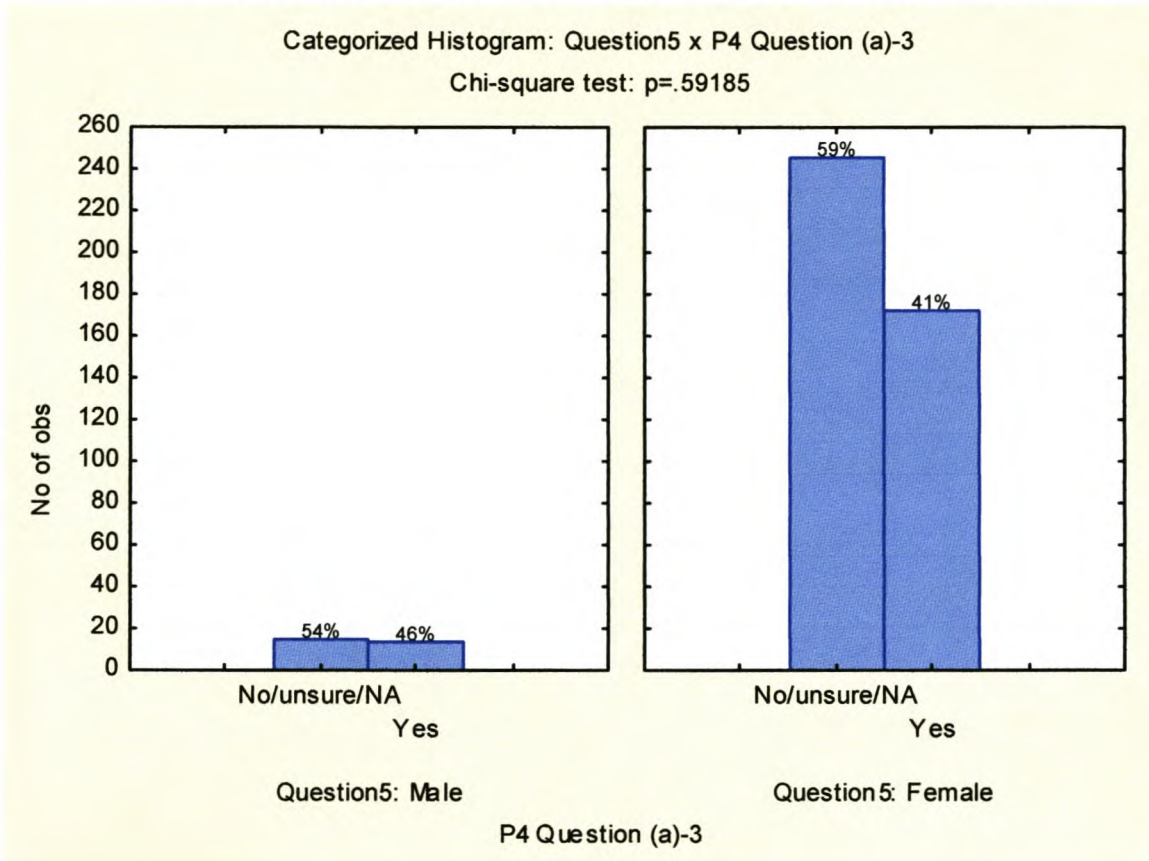
Figure 5.36 shows that a significant number of respondents indicated that they were not aware of any policies addressing the special needs of all learners in educational settings. The Hardap region had the majority of respondents (88%) followed by the Oshana (82%) and Omusati (79%), who were not aware of such specific policies.

FIGURE 5.36 KNOWLEDGE OF THE SPECIFIC POLICY ADDRESSING THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN AT THE CENTRE BY REGION



Although there seemed to be some knowledge about the national early Childhood Development Policy, respondents were not aware of any policies addressing the special needs of children in the centres, an indication that such policies do not exist in early childhood education. Figure 5.37 showed that more male and female teachers indicated their lack of knowledge of any policies that address the special needs of children in educational settings.

FIGURE 5.37 KNOWLEDGE OF THE SPECIFIC POLICY ADDRESSING THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN AT THE CENTRE BY GENDER



5.5.3.1 Early Childhood Curriculum in Place

The Section consisted of questions related to information about the policies in place, curriculum being used as well as teaching methods applied in early childhood education centres in Namibia.

Part 4 (e) consisted of 8 closed-ended questions concerning the curriculum in place at the ECD Centres in Namibia. The majority of the respondents were aware that the curriculum in place made provisions for a safe physical environment at the centre. All the respondents (100%) from the Oshikoto, Caprivi and Khomas regions indicated that they were aware that the curriculum ensured a safe environment, while 56% and 63% respondents from the Karas and Omusati, respectively, responded in the same way.

FIGURE 5.38 KNOWLEDGE, BY REGION, THAT THE CURRICULUM ENSURED A SAFE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AT THE ECD CENTRE

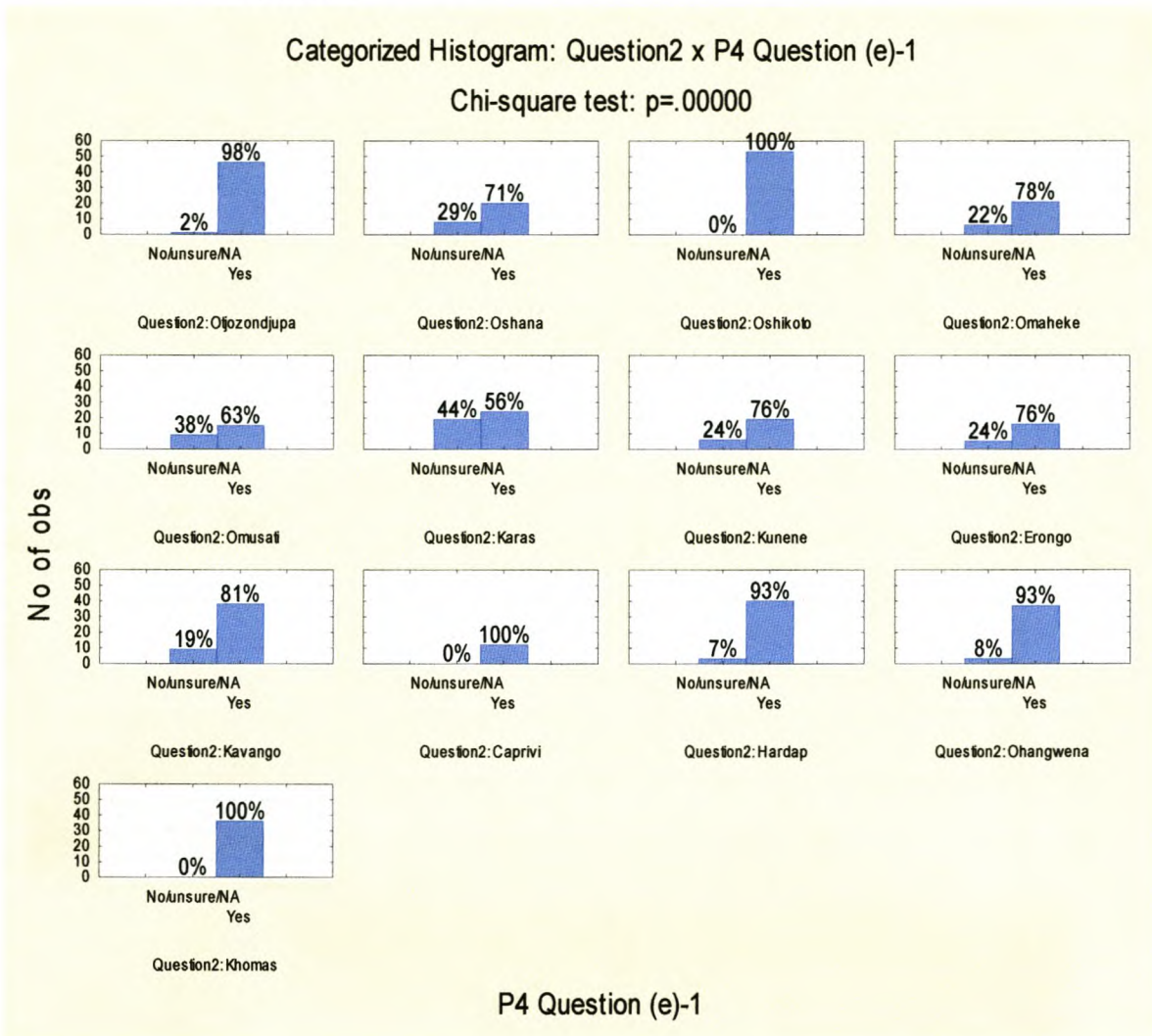
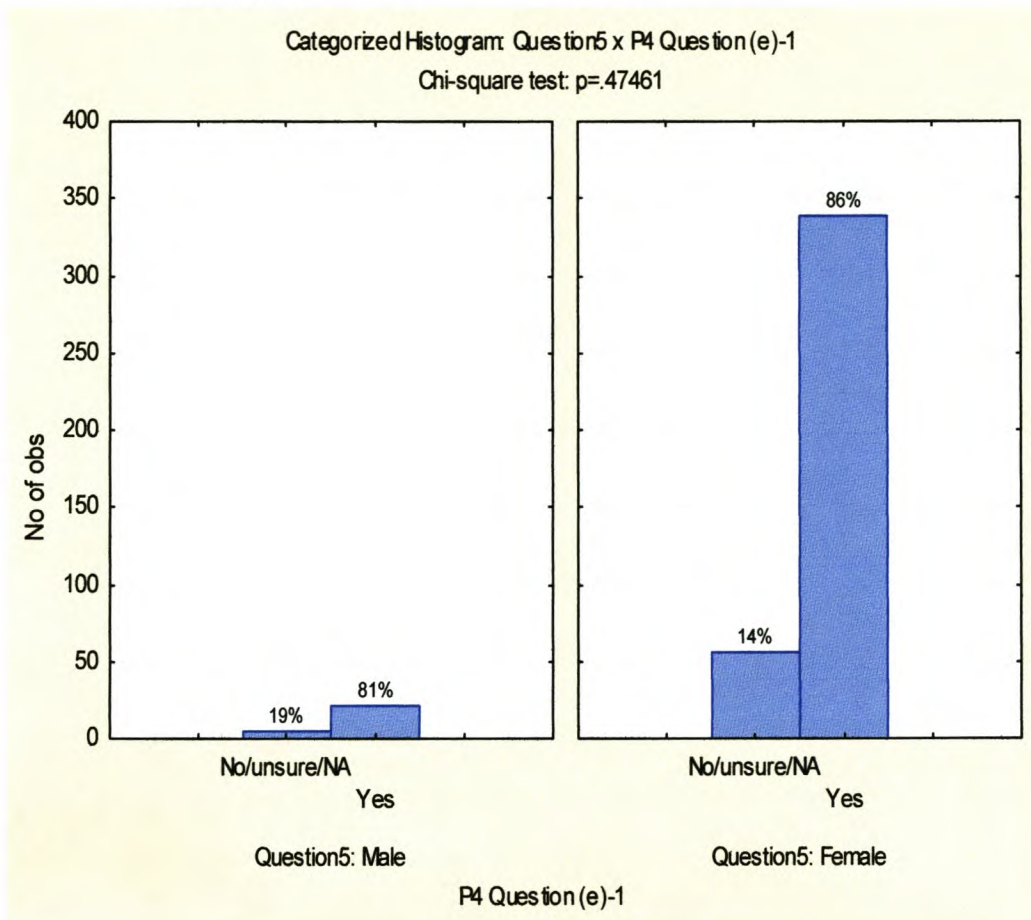


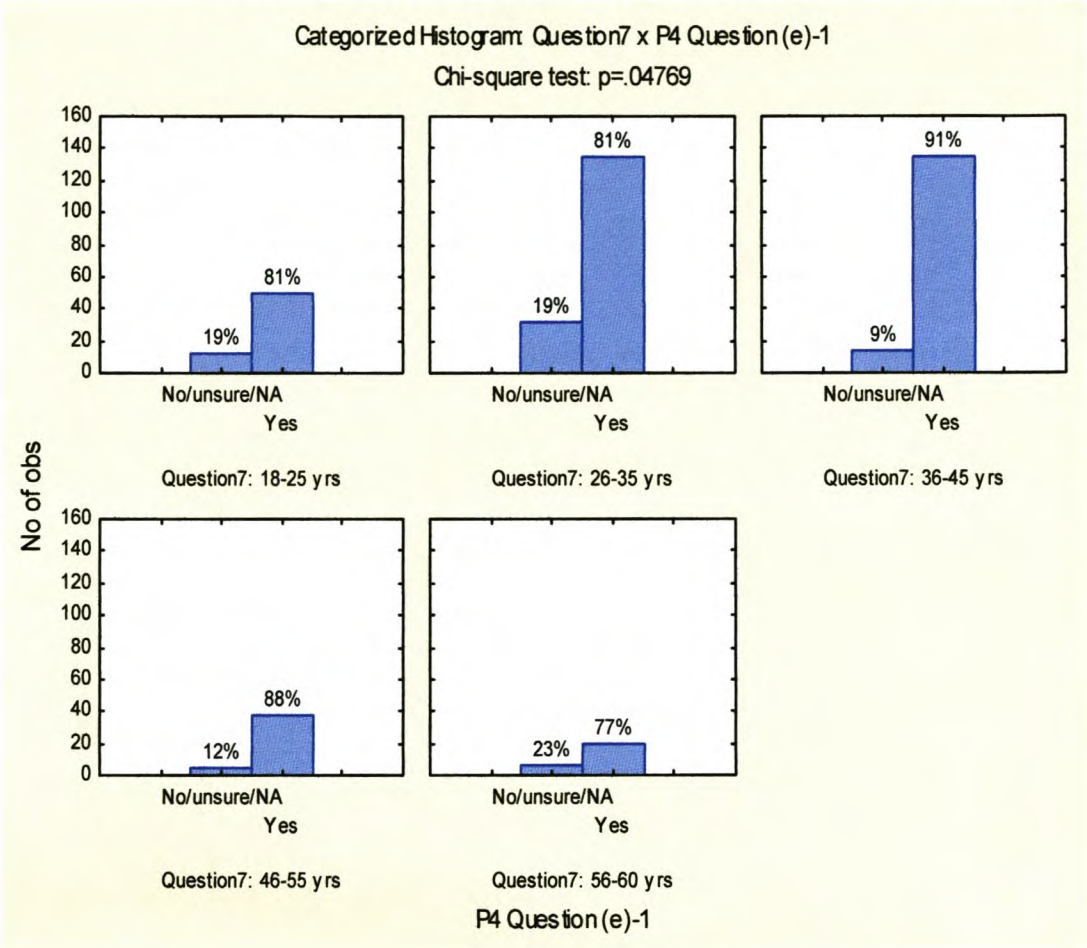
Figure 5.39 below indicates that 86% of the female teachers and 81% of the male teachers were aware that the curriculum at the centre provided a safe environment. This suggests that the gender of the teachers did not play a role in whether or not they knew that the curriculum ensured a safe physical environment.

FIGURE 5.39 KNOWLEDGE THAT THE CURRICULUM ENSURED A SAFE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AT THE ECD CENTRE BY GENDER



Equally, the age difference did not seem to influence the respondents' knowledge about the provisions of a safe environment at ECD centres in Namibia. Figure 5.40 reveals that 91% of the ECD educators between the age group 36 and 46 years were aware that the curriculum of the ECD centres ensured a safe physical provision, only 81% of the group between 18 and 25 years of age were aware of such provisions. An indication that the younger ECD educators need to be fully involved in ECD activities in order to be aware of what is happening at their centres.

FIGURE 5.40 KNOWLEDGE THAT THE CURRICULUM ENSURED A SAFE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AT THE ECD CENTRE BY AGE



More respondents with less than 15 years of teaching experience were aware that the curriculum at their centres ensured the provision of a safe physical environment compared to those with more than 15 years of teaching experience. While 80% and 90% of the respondents with 1 to 5 years and 6 to 10 years respectively, were aware of such provisions, only 89% of those 11 to 15 years, 88% of the 16 to 20 years and over 20 years of teaching experience were aware of such provisions.

FIGURE 5.41 KNOWLEDGE THAT THE CURRICULUM ENSURED A SAFE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AT THE ECD CENTRE BY TEACHING EXPERIENCE

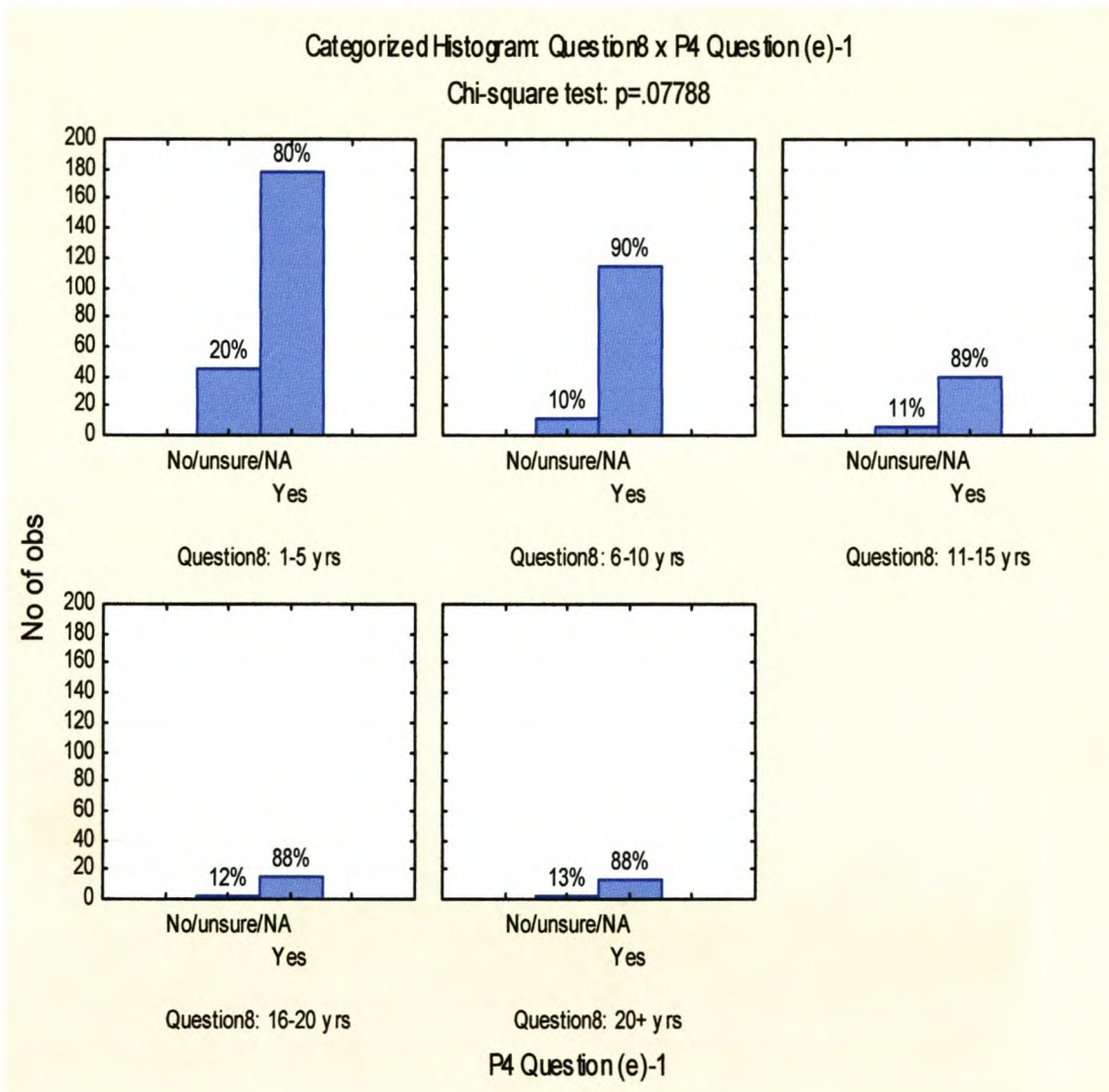
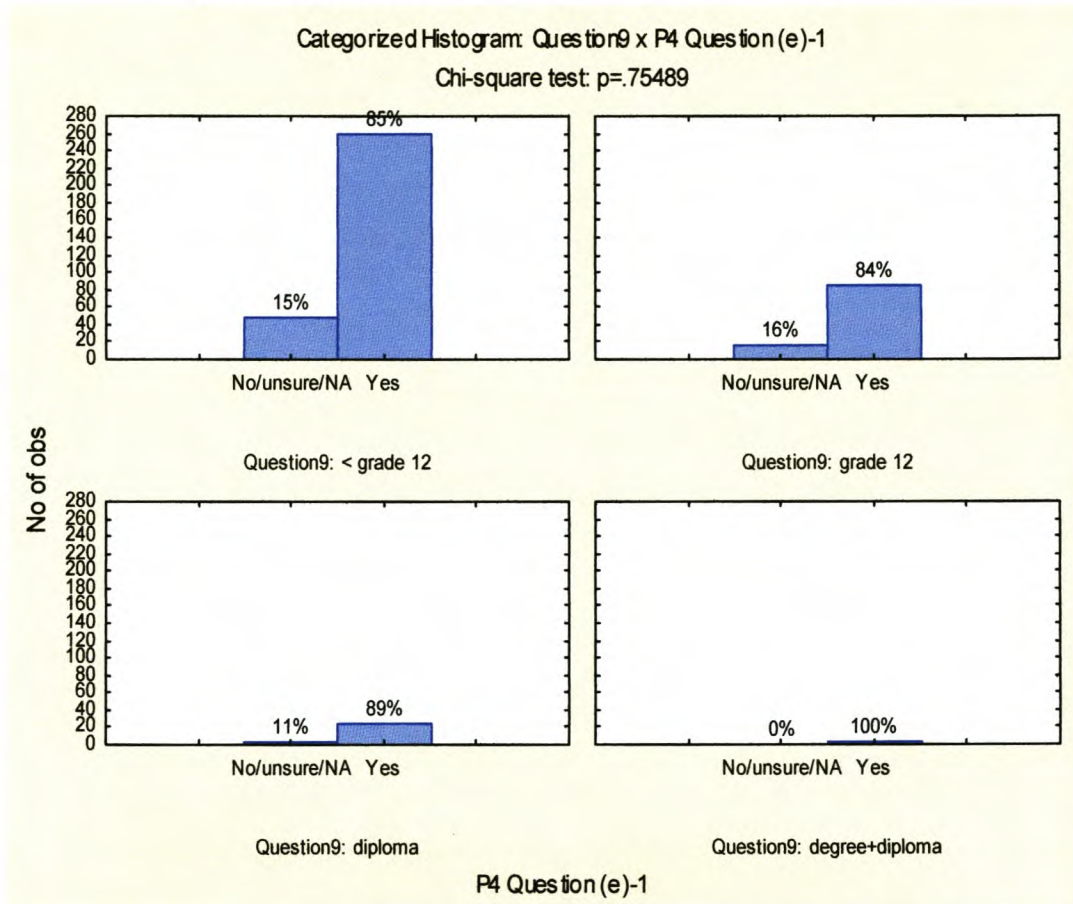


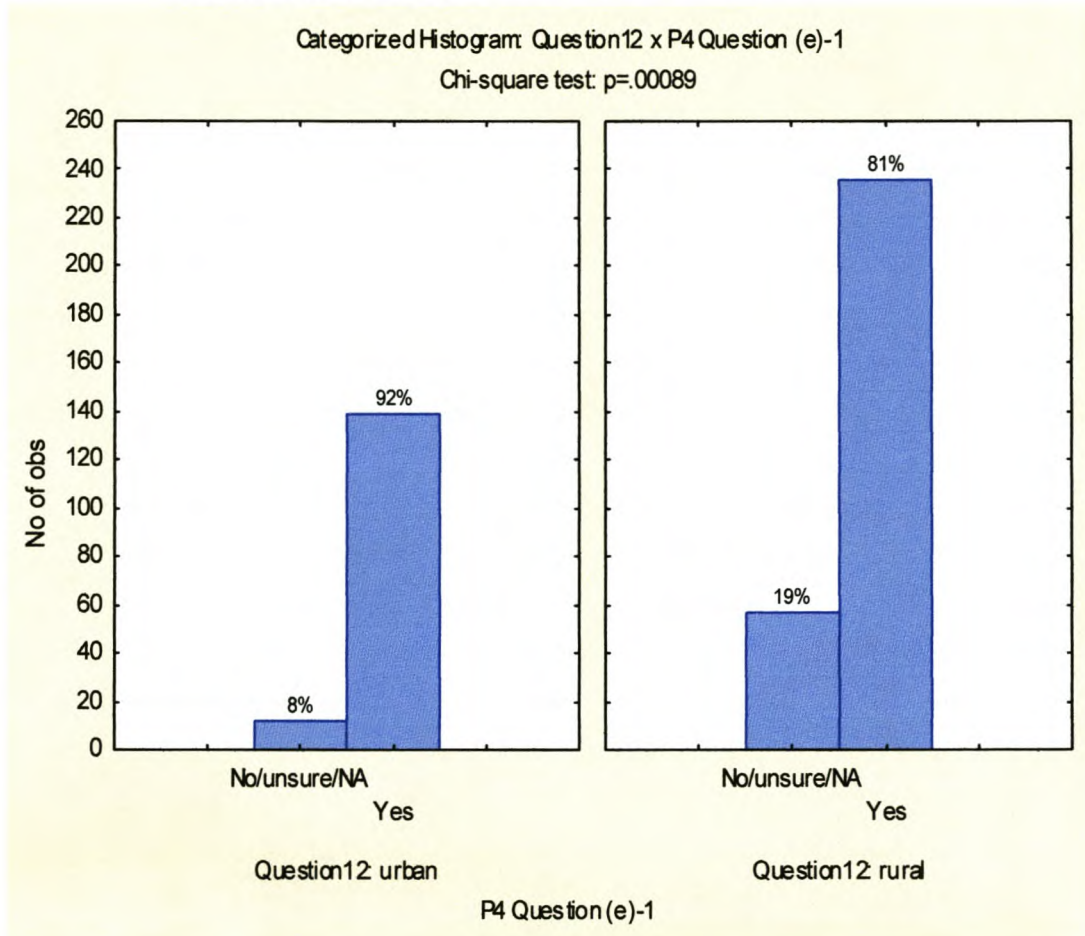
Figure 5.42 reveals that all the respondents (100%) of ECD educators with a degree and a diploma in education were aware that the curriculum of the ECD Centres made provisions for a safe environment. This indicates that the better qualified the ECD educator, the more knowledge and information they may have with regard to the provisions of certain issues and aspects in early childhood education.

FIGURE 5.42 KNOWLEDGE THAT THE CURRICULUM ENSURED A SAFE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AT THE ECD CENTRE BY QUALIFICATION



More educators in urban areas were aware that their curriculum made provision for a safe physical environment compared to ECD educators from rural areas. While 91% of the ECD educators from urban areas were aware of such provisions, only 81% of their colleagues from rural areas were aware of such provisions in the curriculum (see Figure 5.43). Another indication that ECD educators from the rural areas in Namibia must become more involved in ECD and ensure that they are fully aware of the curricula content they are implementing.

FIGURE 5.43 KNOWLEDGE THAT THE CURRICULUM ENSURED A SAFE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AT THE ECD CENTRE BY URBAN AND RURAL AREA



The data reveals that over 70% of the respondents from all the regions, with the exception of Omusati (67%), Karas (55%) and Kunene regions (60%) indicated that the curriculum at the ECD centres encouraged children to be taught in the same classroom settings, irrespective of their abilities. More than 80% of both male and female respondents gave the same response as did those teachers with the highest qualifications degree plus diploma (100%). This indicates that the curriculum promotes an inclusive approach to ECD in Namibia (see Figures 5.44, 5.45 and 5.46).

FIGURE 5.44 RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO REGION WHO INDICATED THAT THE CURRICULUM ENCOURAGES ALL CHILDREN IRRESPECTIVE OF ABILITIES TO BE TAUGHT IN THE SAME CLASSROOM SETTINGS

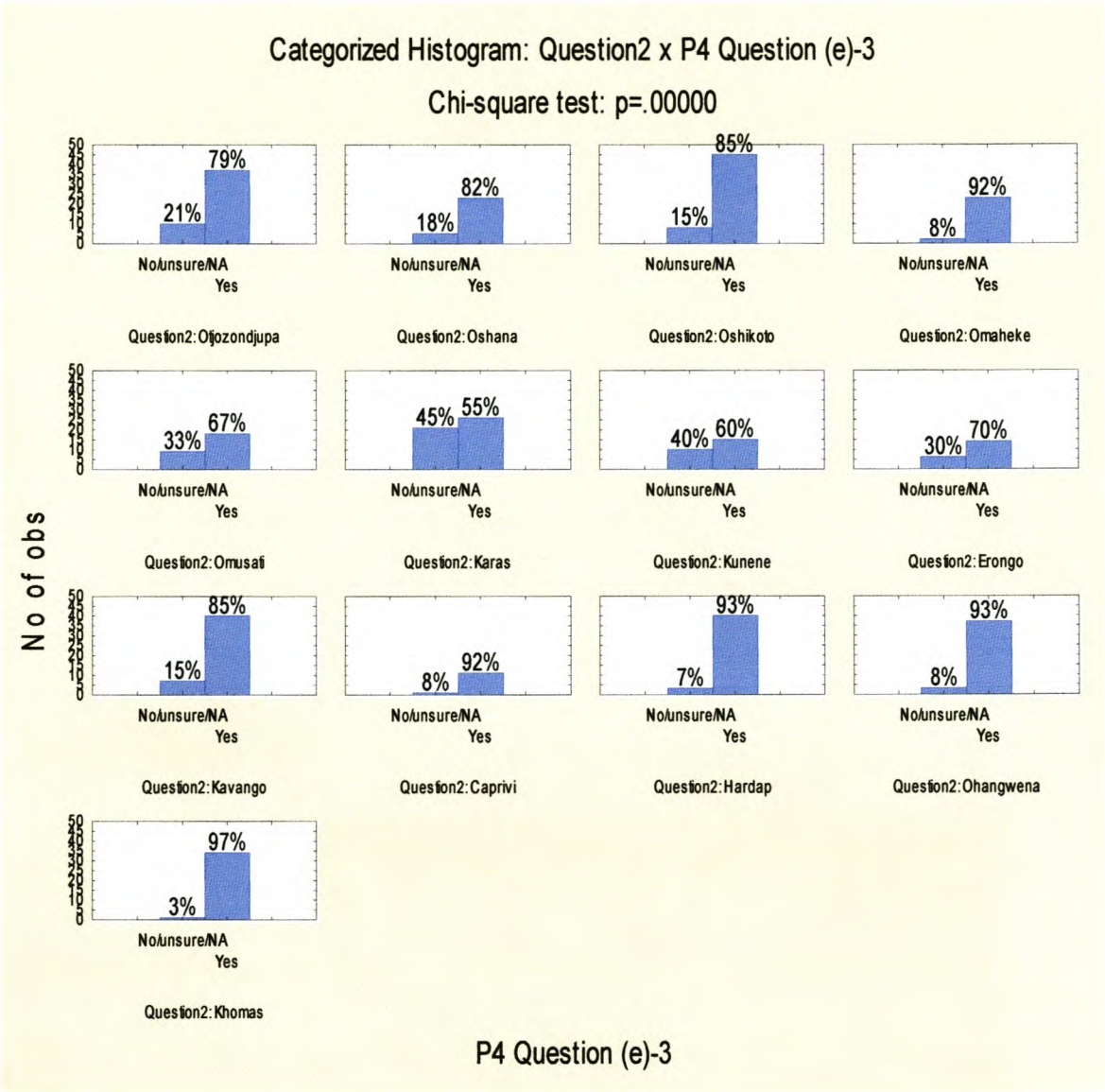


FIGURE 5.45 RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO GENDER WHO INDICATED THAT THE CURRICULUM ENCOURAGES ALL CHILDREN IRRESPECTIVE OF ABILITIES TO BE TAUGHT IN THE SAME CLASSROOM SETTINGS

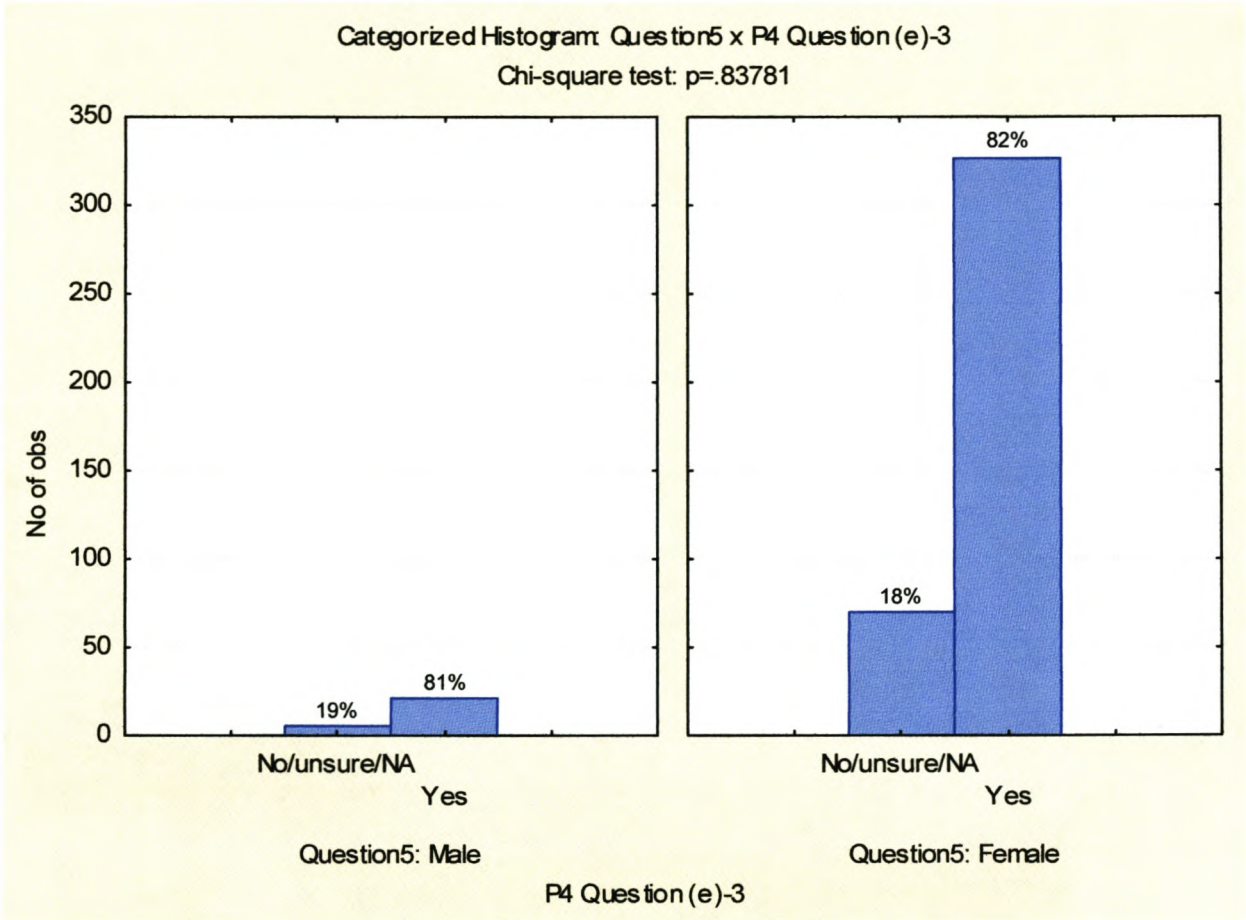
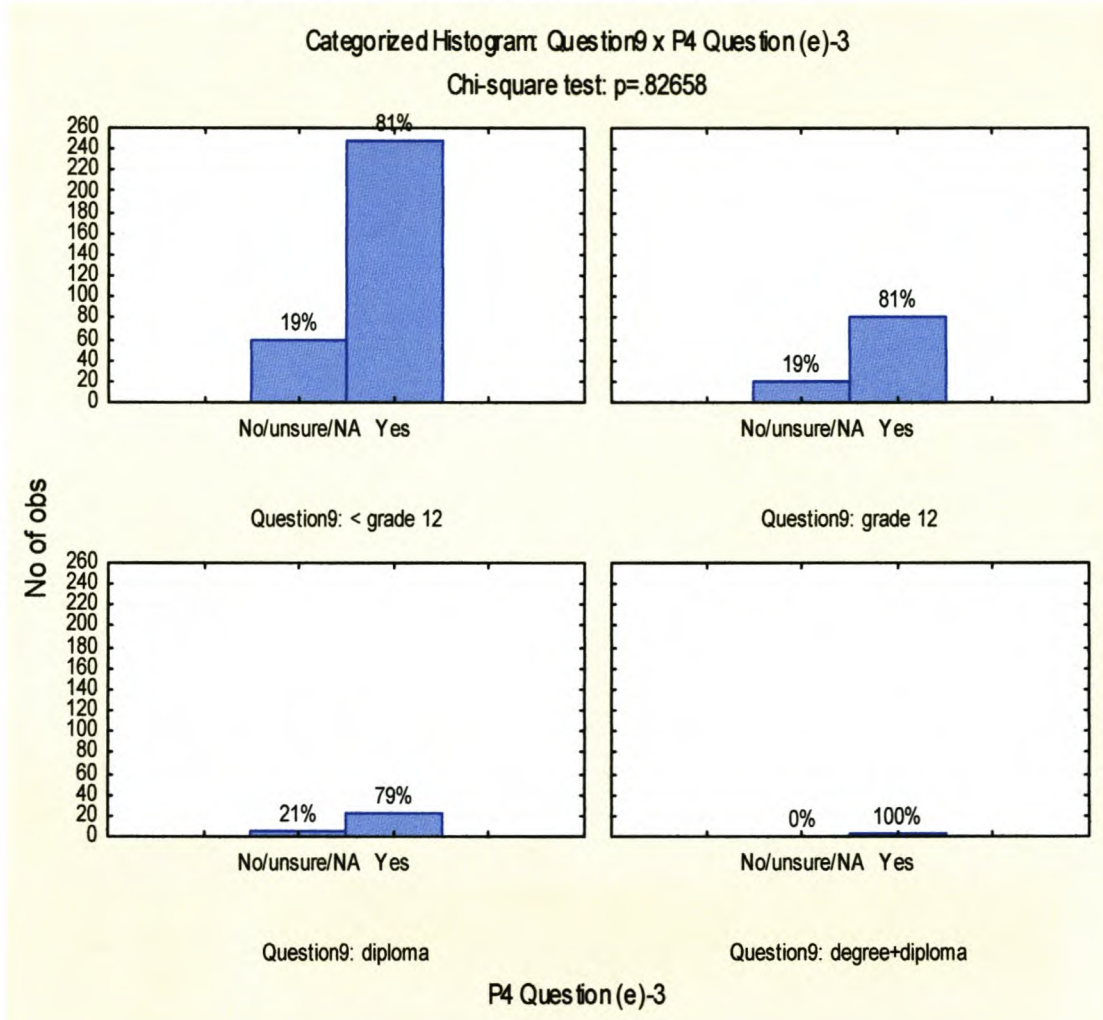


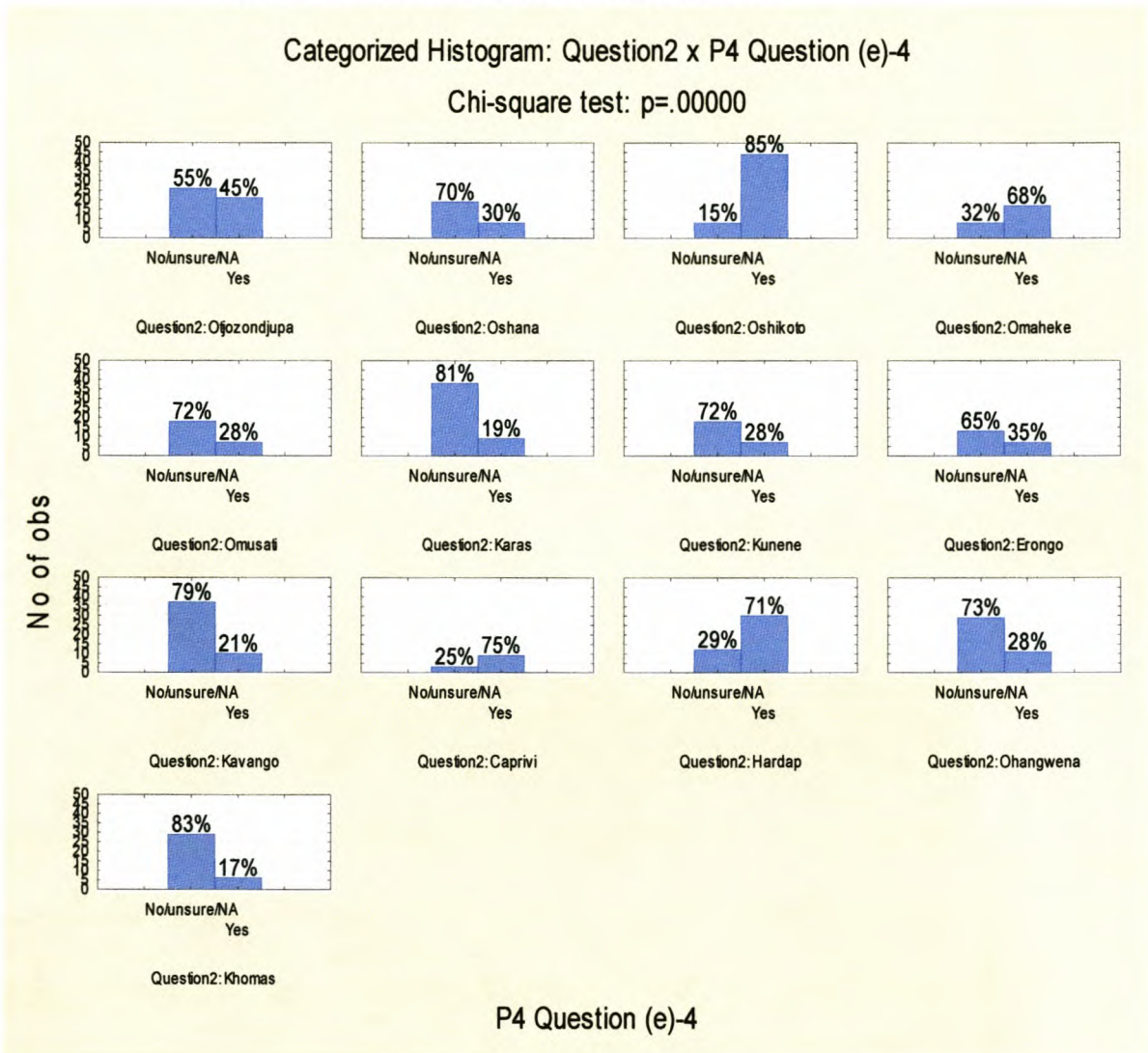
FIGURE 5.46 RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO QUALIFICATIONS WHO INDICATED THAT THE CURRICULUM ENCOURAGES ALL CHILDREN IRRESPECTIVE OF ABILITIES TO BE TAUGHT IN THE SAME CLASSROOM SETTINGS



Concerning whether the curriculum made provision for children who are hearing impaired, the data revealed that there were regional disparities with regard to the provisions for children who are hearing impaired in early childhood education in Namibia. Surprisingly, 83% and 73% of the respondents from the Khomas and Ohangwena regions indicated that the curriculum did not make provision for children who are hearing impaired while 85% and 75% of the respondents from the Oshikoto and Caprivi regions, respectively, indicated that the curriculum made provisions for children who are hearing impaired (see Figure 5.47). The

data revealed that there is no unified curriculum in early childhood education in Namibia.

FIGURE 5.47 RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO REGION WHO INDICATED THAT THE CURRICULUM MADE PROVISION FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE HEARING IMPAIRED IN ECD



While 80% of the male teachers said that the curriculum did not make provisions for children who are hearing impaired, 45% of teachers overall contended that the curriculum made provisions for children who are hearing impaired. The data

reveals that the majority of teachers in early childhood education in Namibia might not be fully conversant with the content of the curriculum in place in the centres (see Figure 5.48).

FIGURE 5.48 RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO GENDER WHO INDICATED THAT THE CURRICULUM MADE PROVISION FOR CHILDREN IN ECD WHO ARE HEARING IMPAIRED

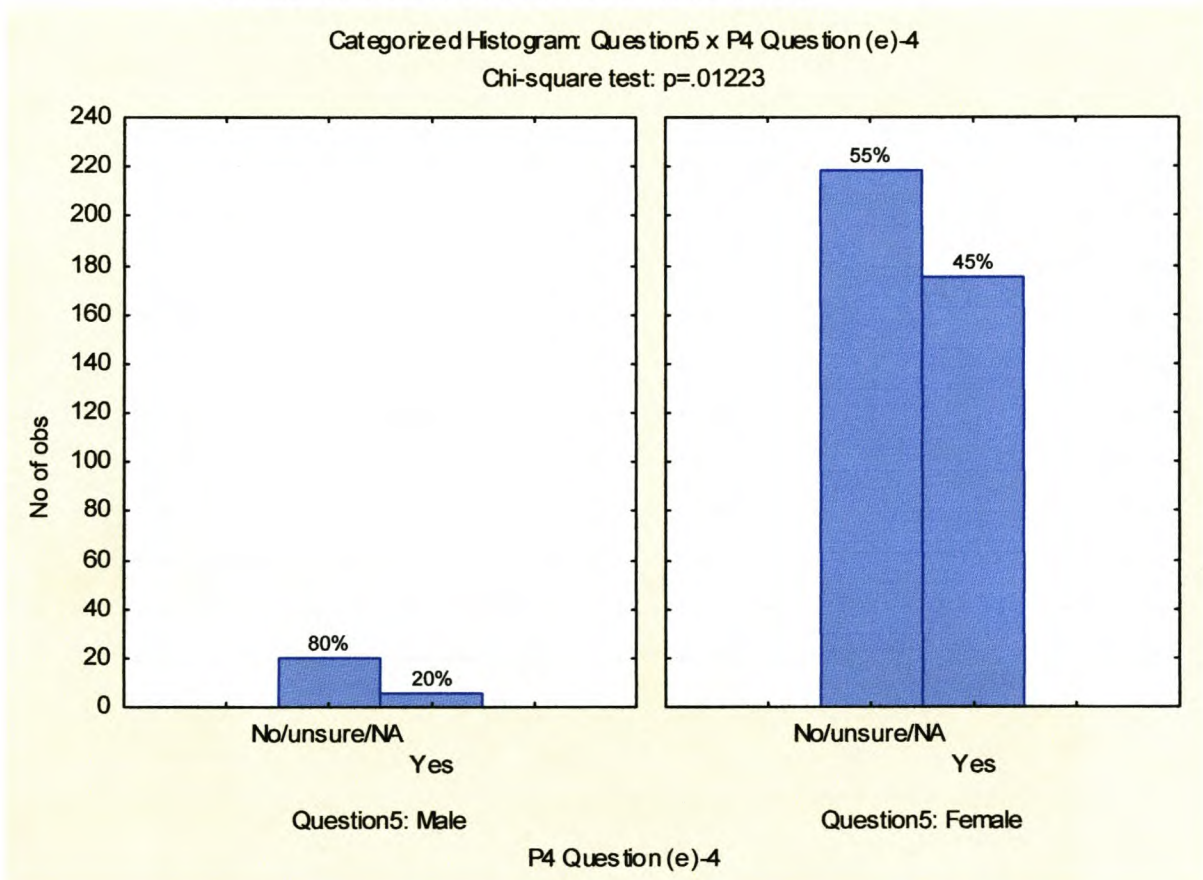


Figure 5.49 reveals that the majority of the respondents in all age categories indicated that the curriculum in the ECD centres did not make provision for children who are hearing impaired. The older respondents in the age groups between 46 and 55 and 56 and 60 years made up 64% of the total respondents. The data interestingly revealed that 59% of the respondents with between 16 and 20 years of teaching experience indicated that the curriculum at the ECD centres

made provisions for children who are hearing impaired while 65% of the respondents with over 20 years of teaching experience indicated that it did not make such provisions. More that 50% of all the other respondents with less that 20 years of teaching experience indicated that the curriculum did not make provisions for children who are hearing impaired (see Figure 5.49). Lack of provision for hearing-impaired children indicates a negative approach towards inclusive education in ECD in Namibia.

FIGURE 5.49 RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO AGE GROUP WHO INDICATED THAT THE CURRICULUM MADE PROVISION FOR CHILDREN IN ECD WHO ARE HEARING IMPAIRED

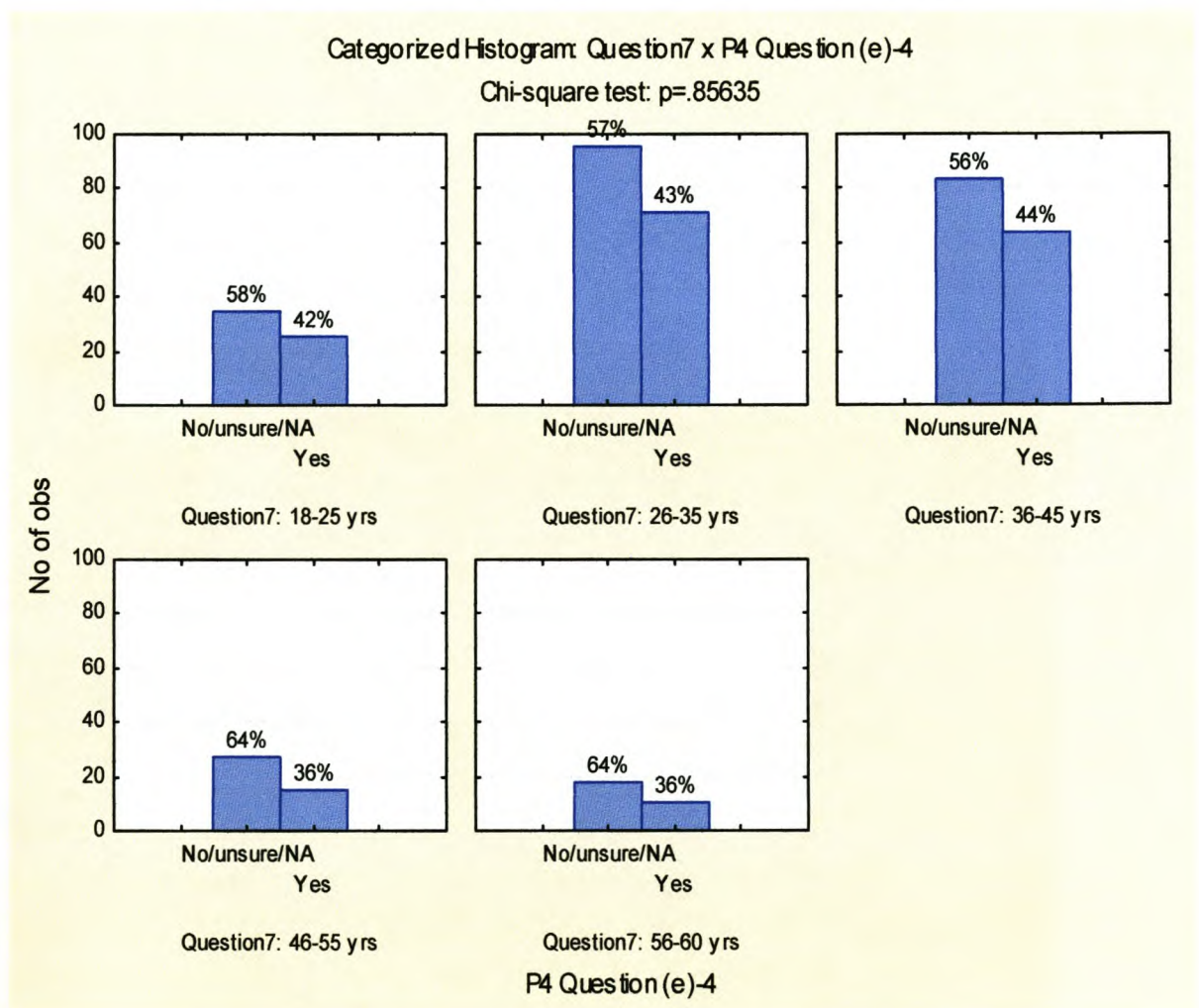


FIGURE 5.50 RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO TEACHING EXPERIENCE WHO INDICATED THAT THE CURRICULUM MADE PROVISION FOR CHILDREN IN ECD WHO ARE HEARING IMPAIRED

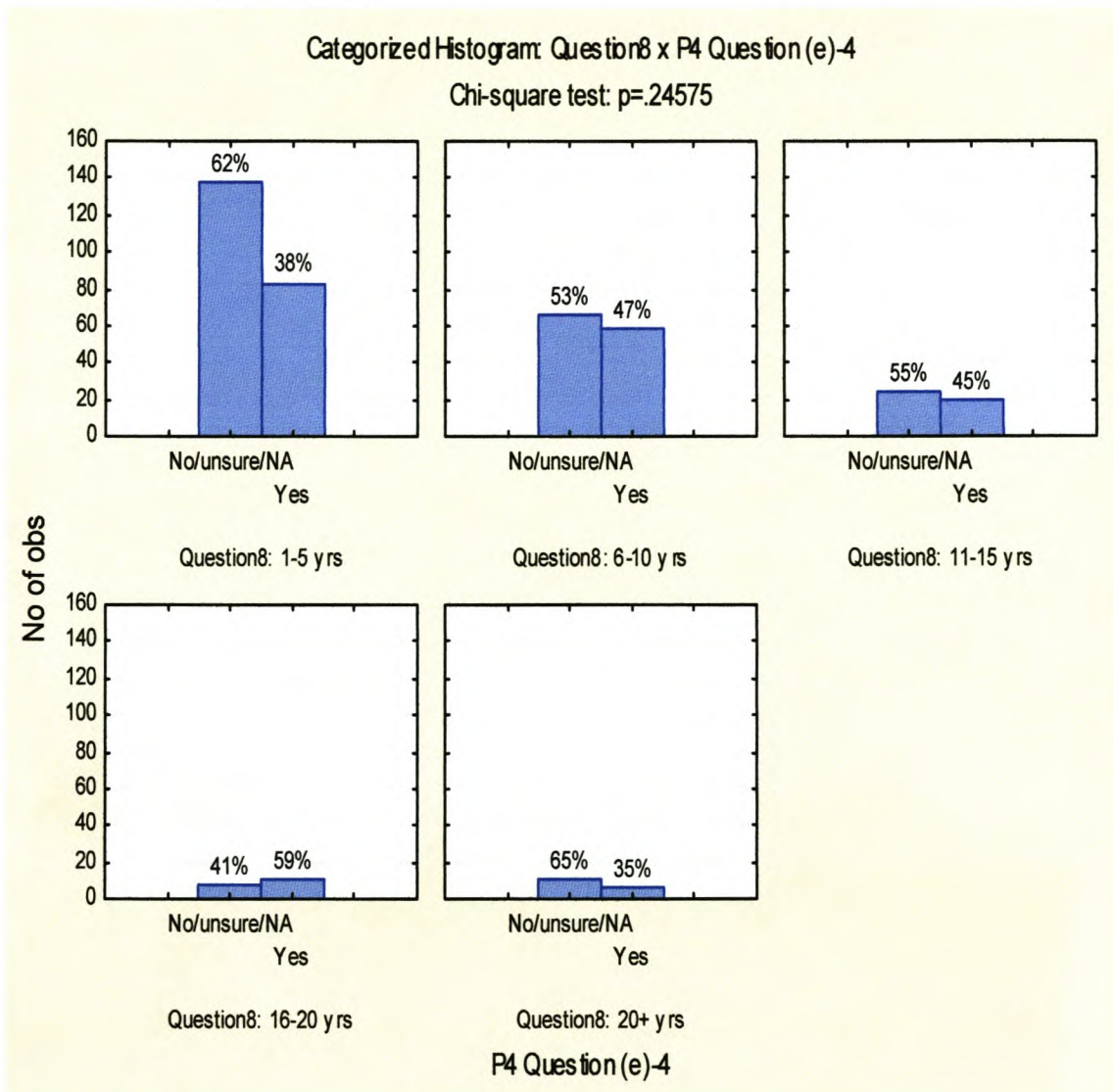
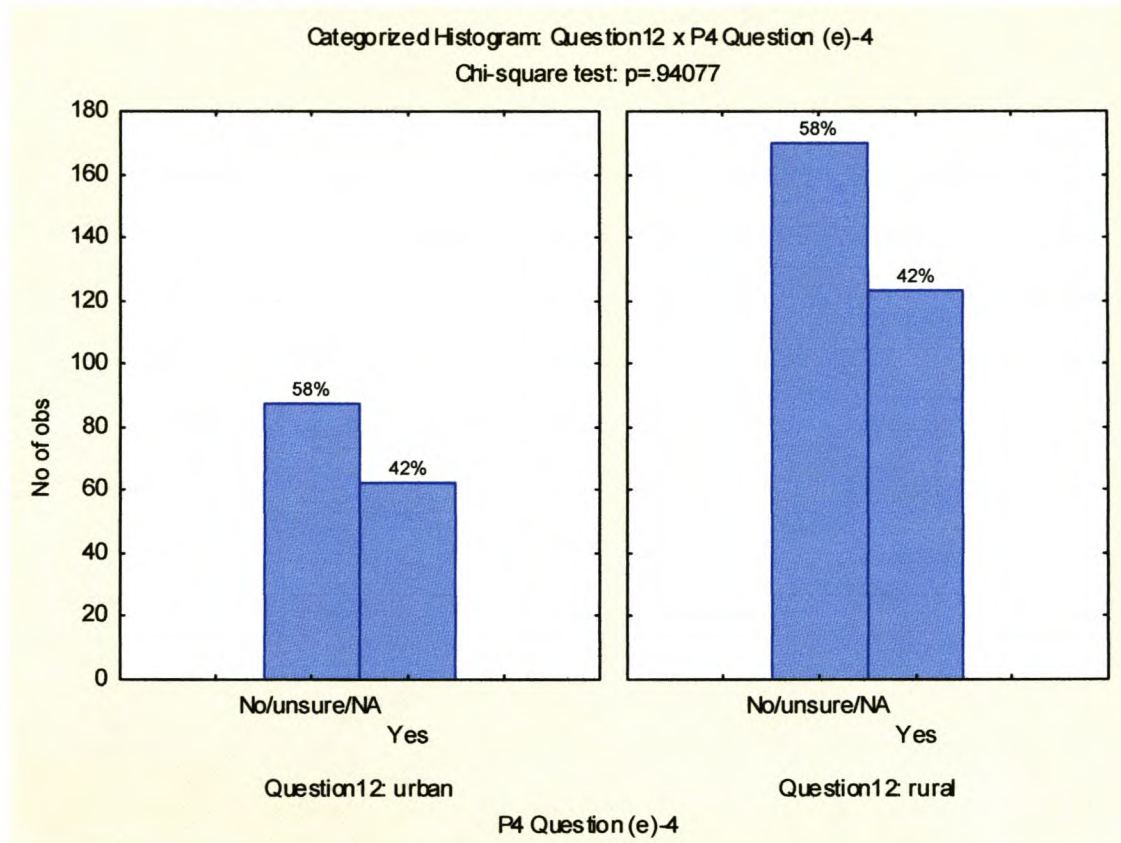


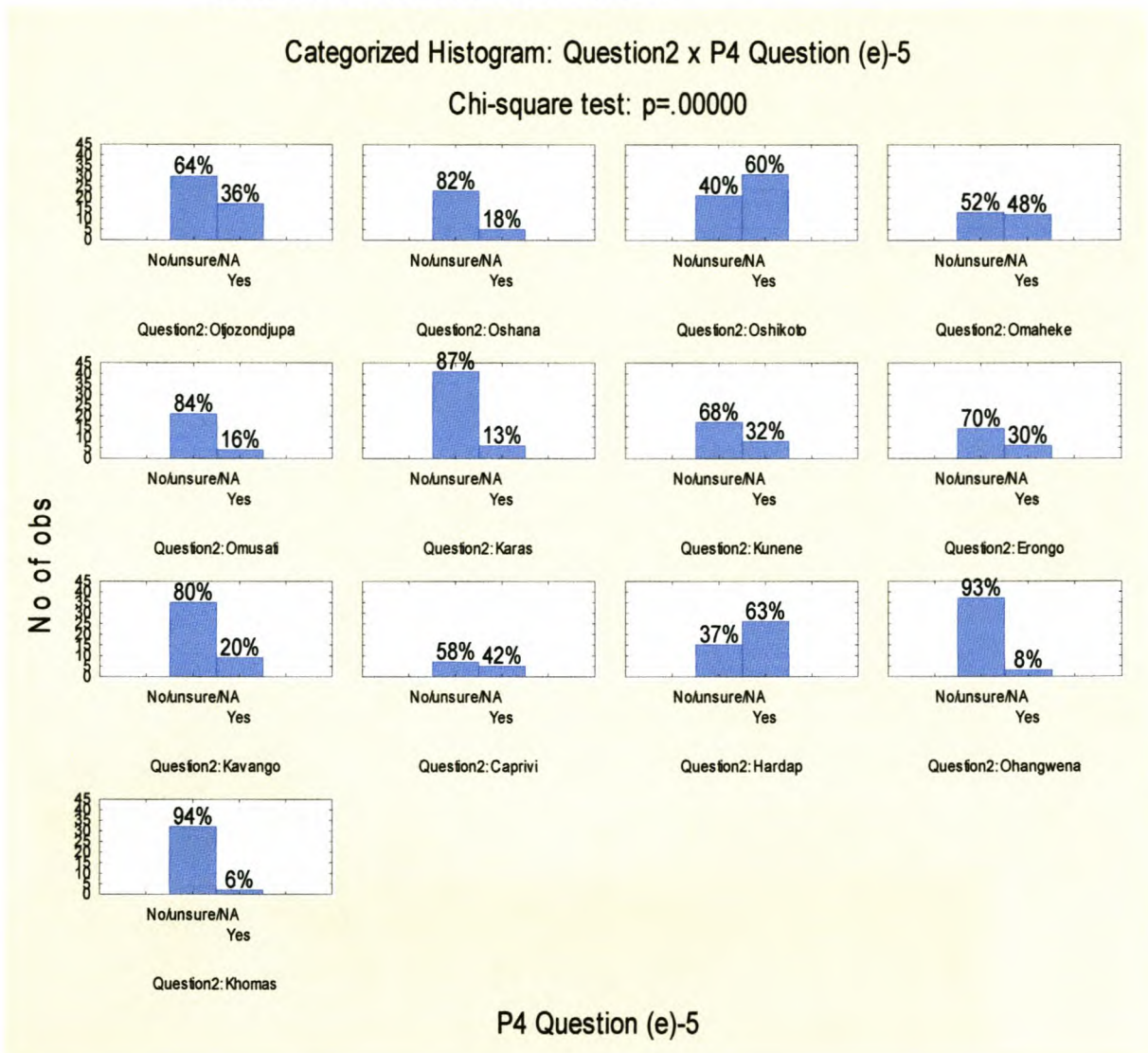
Figure 5.51 reveals an equal number of respondents from both urban and rural areas who indicated that the curriculum in their centres did not make provisions for children who are hearing impaired.

FIGURE 5.51 RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO TEACHING EXPERIENCE WHO INDICATED THAT THE CURRICULUM MADE PROVISION FOR CHILDREN IN ECD WHO ARE HEARING IMPAIRED



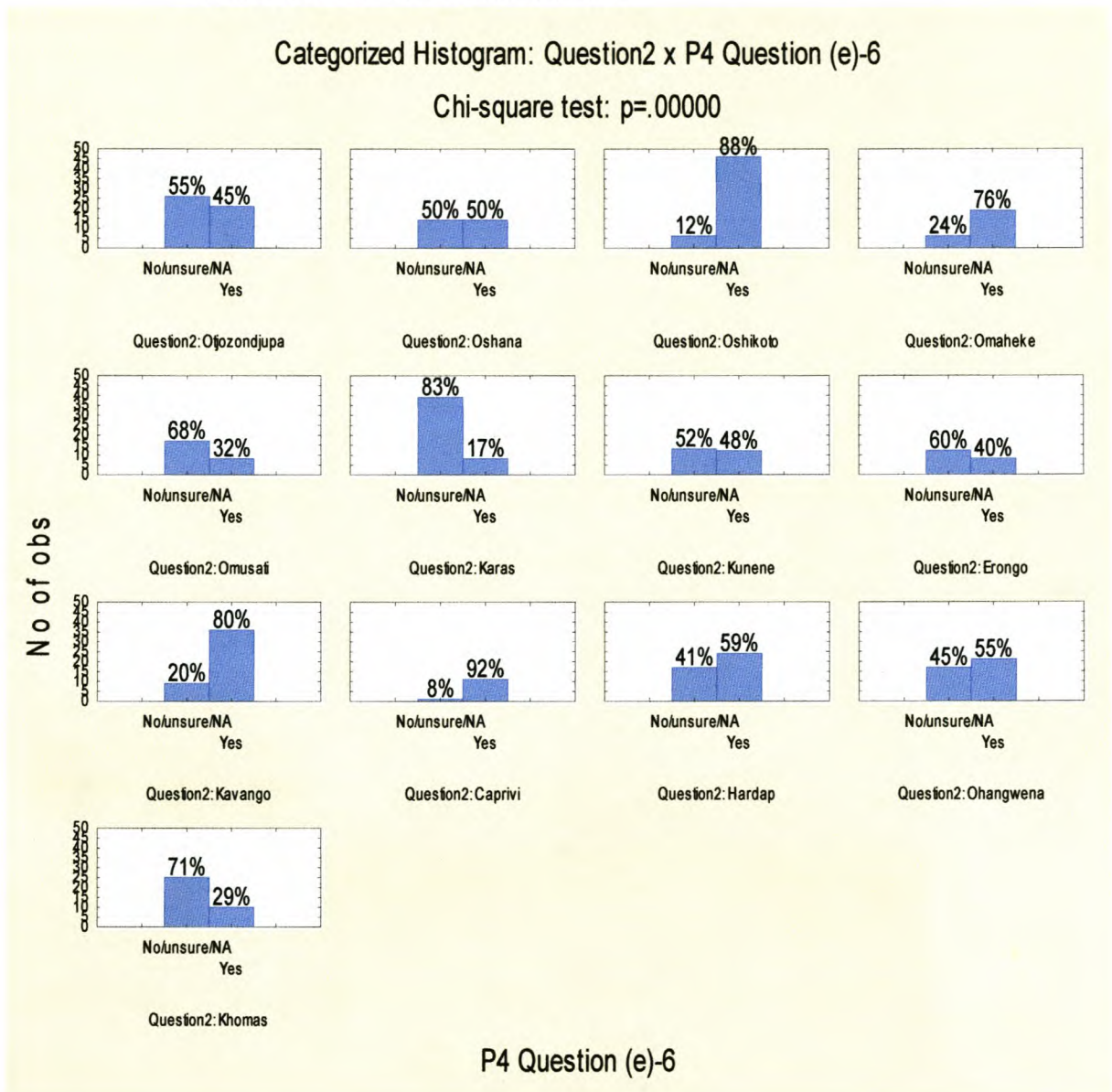
The data reveals the same information with regard to the provision for children who are visually impaired. Figure 5.52 indicates that the majority of ECD centres in Namibia did not make provisions for children who are visually impaired. Interestingly, 94% of the respondents from the Khomas region revealed that their curriculum did not make provision for visually impaired children compared to 60% of the respondents from the Oshikoto region who indicated that their curriculum did make such provisions.

FIGURE 5.52 RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO REGION WHO INDICATED THAT THE CURRICULUM MADE PROVISION FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE VISUALLY IMPAIRED



Concerning whether the ECD curriculum made provision for children with physical disabilities, there were glaring disparities in the answers. While 83% and 71% of the respondents from the Karas and Khomas regions, respectively, indicated that the curriculum did not make such provision, 88% of respondents from the Oshikoto region and 92% from the Caprivi regions revealed that the curriculum made provisions for children with physical disabilities (see Figure 5.53).

FIGURE 5.53 RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO REGION WHO INDICATED THAT THE CURRICULUM MADE PROVISION FOR CHILDREN WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES



With regard to the age category of the ECD educators, 57% of the younger respondents in the age group of 18 and 45 years revealed that the curriculum made provision for children with physical disabilities while the older ECD educators 46 to 55 years (56%) and 56 to 60 years (67%) revealed that the curriculum did not make such provisions. It seems that the older ECD educators

have more knowledge about the ECD curriculum as opposed to their younger counterparts. Equally, those educators with more years of teaching experience revealed that the curriculum did not cater for children with physical disabilities (see Figures 5.54 and 5.55).

FIGURE 5.54 RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO AGE CATEGORY WHO INDICATED THAT THE CURRICULUM MADE PROVISION FOR CHILDREN WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

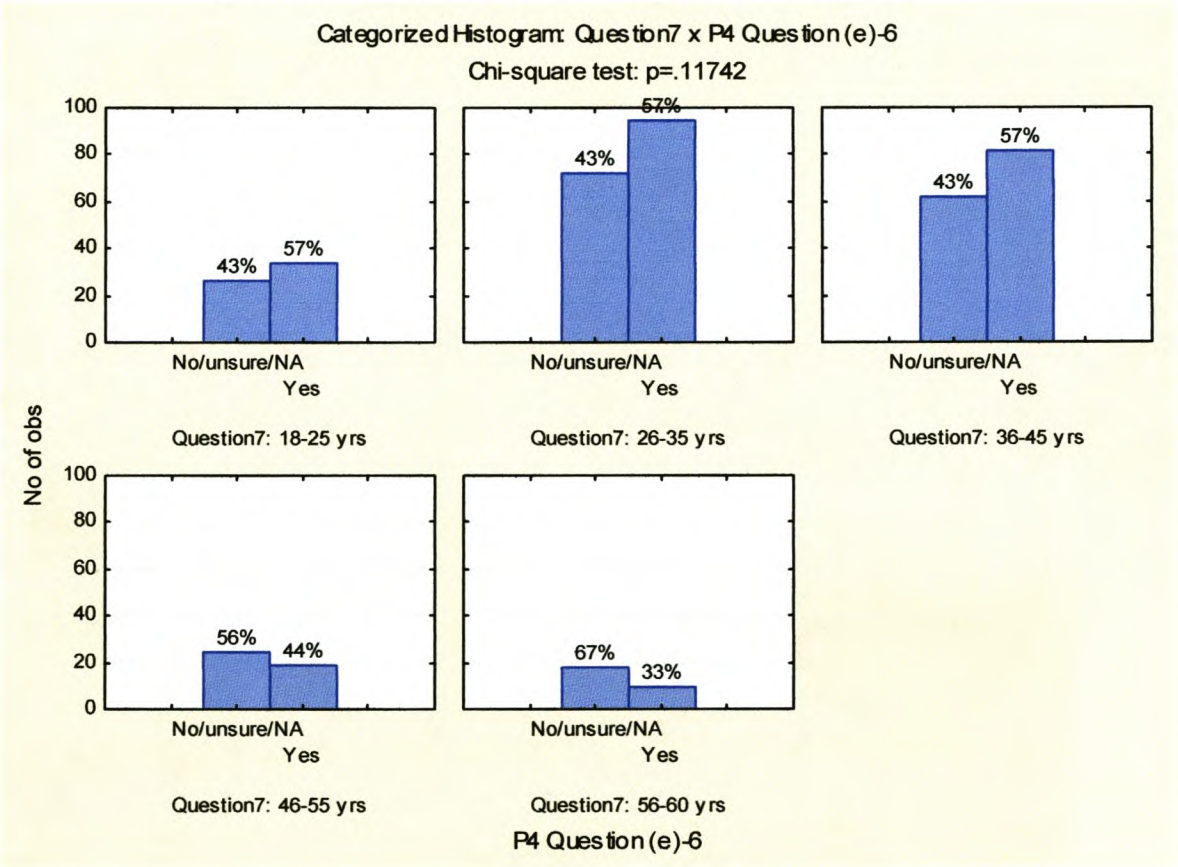
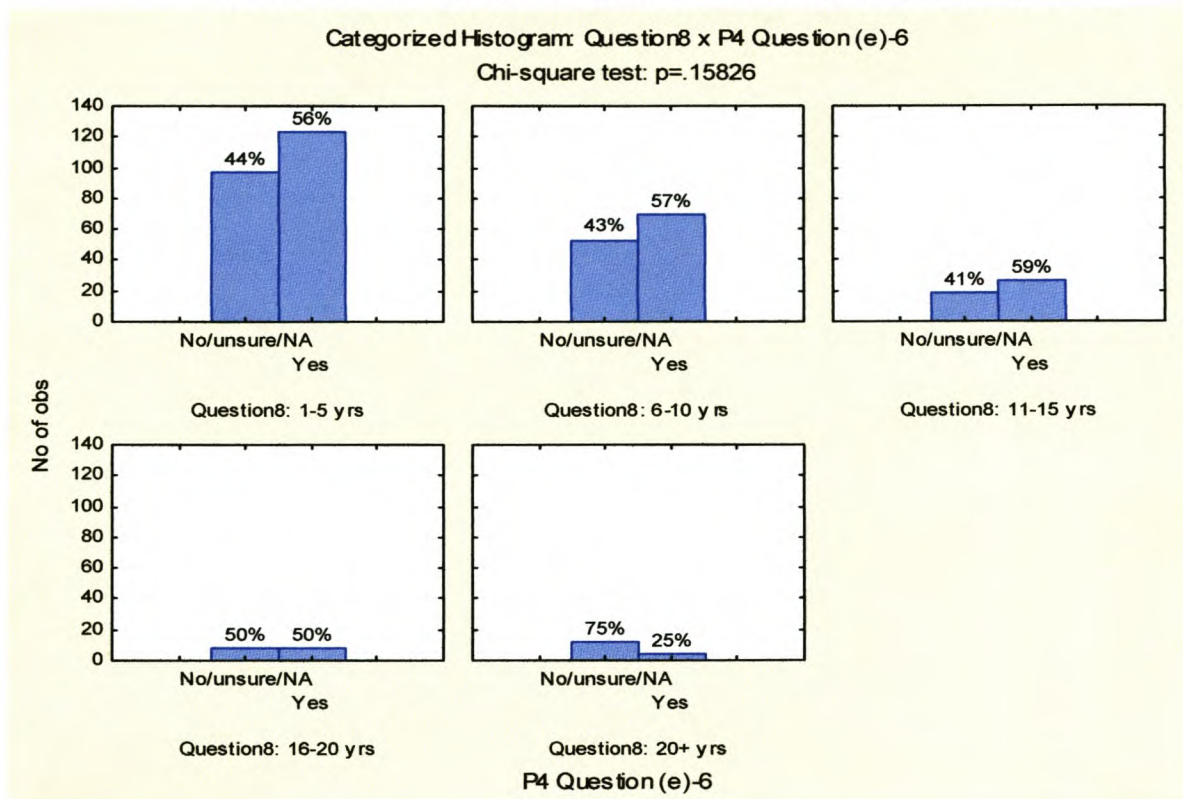


FIGURE 5.55 RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO TEACHING EXPERIENCE WHO INDICATED THAT THE CURRICULUM MADE PROVISION FOR CHILDREN WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES



The majority of the respondents said that the curriculum in their centres did not make provisions for an inclusive approach to early childhood education in Namibia. A total number of 92% of the respondents from the Omusati region revealed that their curriculum did not make provisions for an inclusive education approach. On the contrary, 82% of the respondents from the Ohangwena indicated that their curriculum made such provisions (see Figure 5.56).

FIGURE 5.56 RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO REGION WHO INDICATED THAT THE CURRICULUM DID NOT MAKE PROVISIONS FOR AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION APPROACH

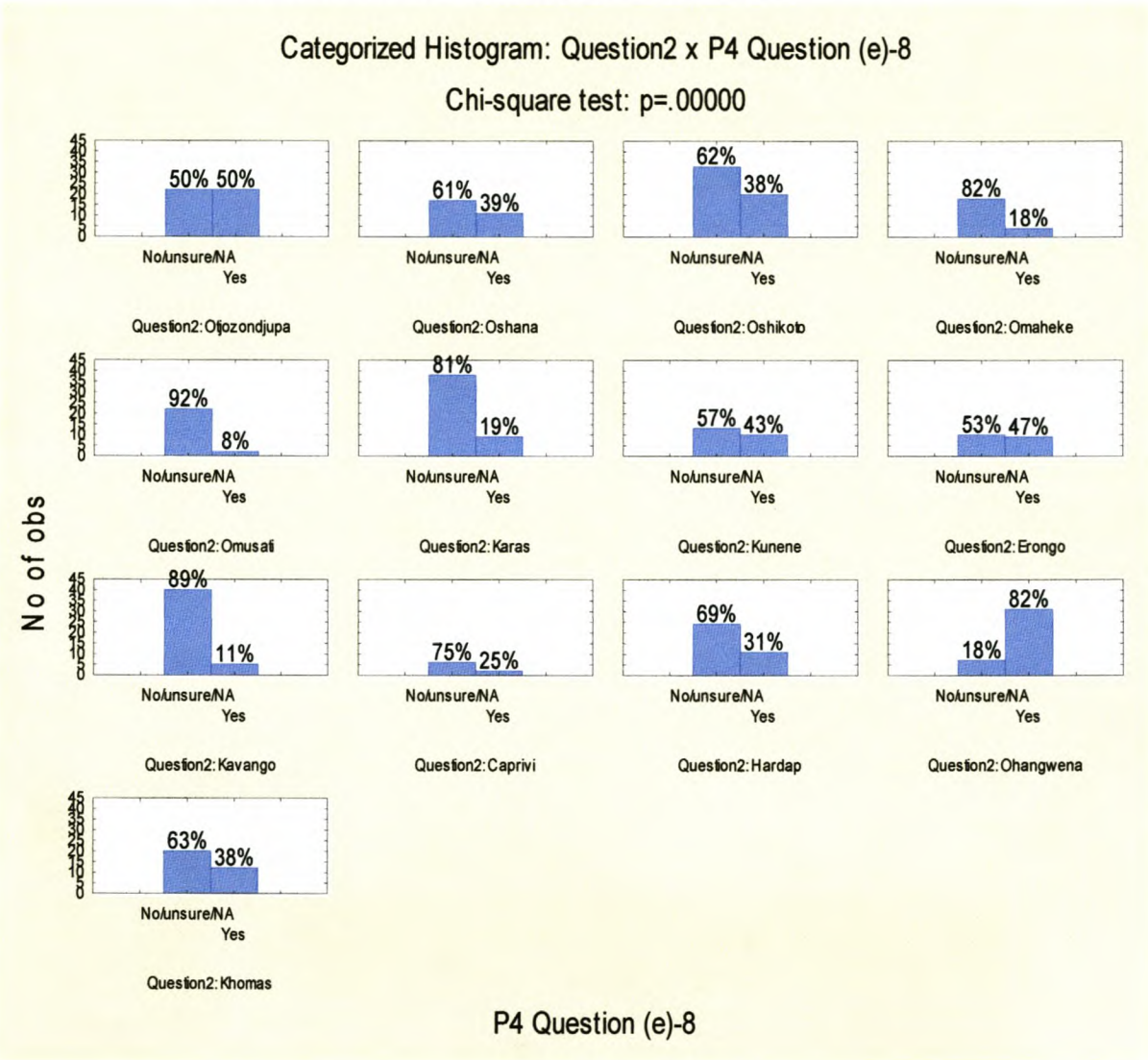
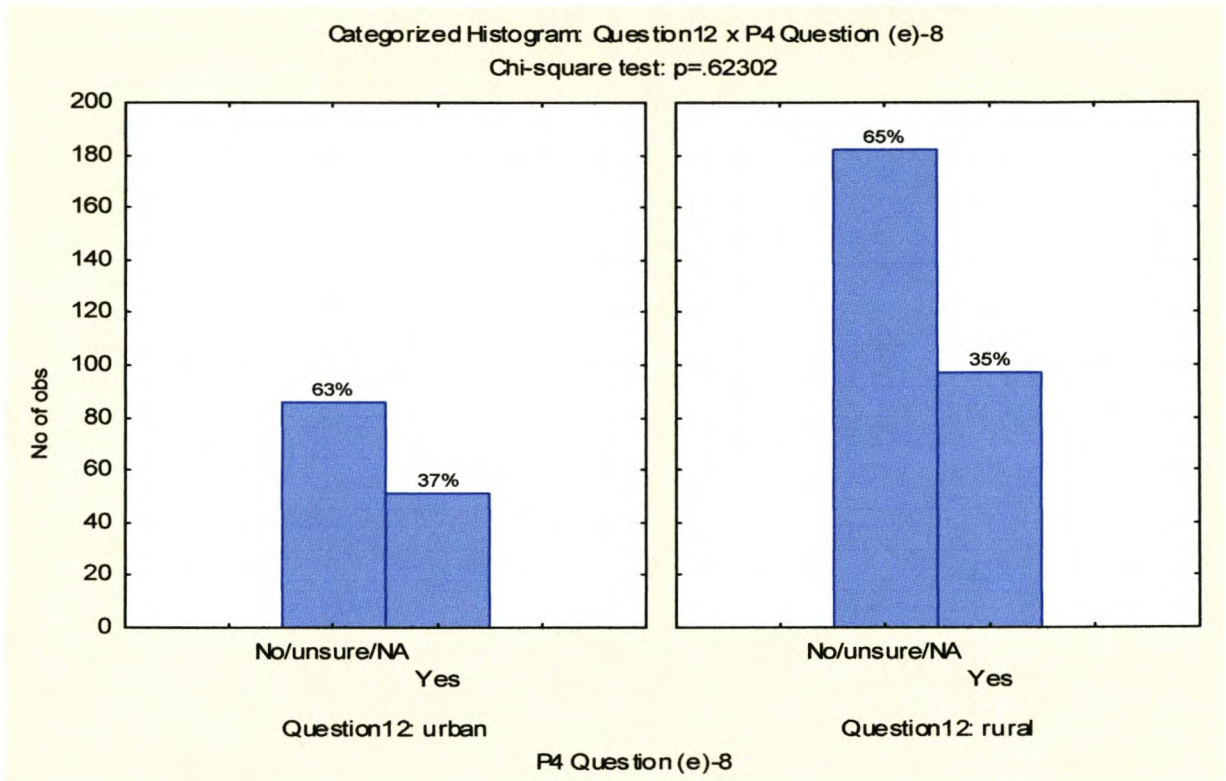


Figure 5.57 revealed that while 63% of the respondents from urban areas indicated that their curriculum did not make provisions for an inclusive education approach, 65% of the respondents from rural areas indicated the same.

FIGURE 5.57 RESPONDENTS BETWEEN URBAN AND RURAL AREA WHO INDICATED THAT THE CURRICULUM DID NOT MAKE PROVISIONS FOR AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION APPROACH



5.6 TEACHING METHODS

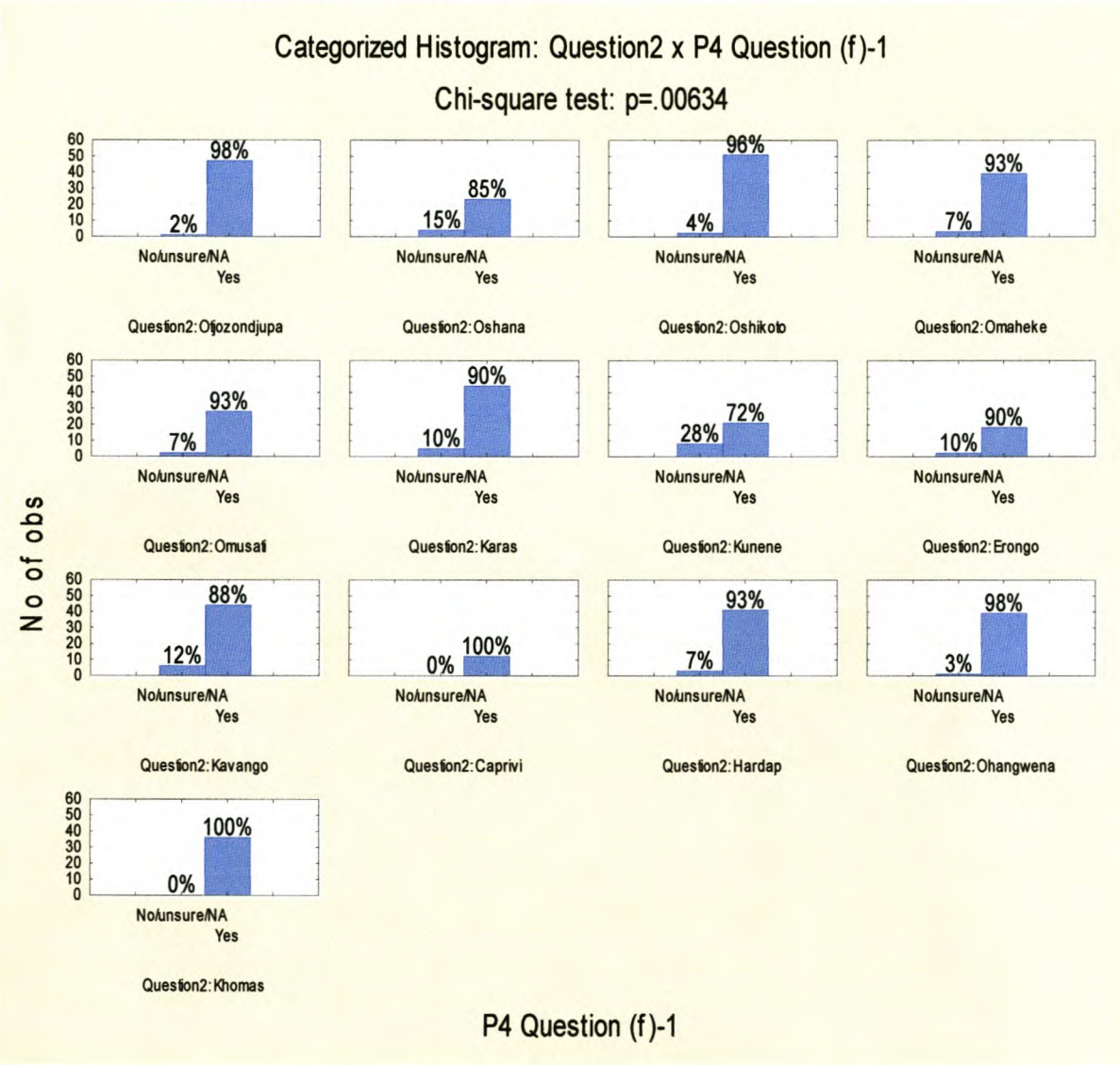
The question was asked in order to establish whether the ECD educators in Namibia were providing child-friendly approaches to education and whether teachers preferred to work with all children irrespective of their learning challenges.

5.6.1 Adapting Teaching Methods to suit the needs of the Individual Learner

The majority of the respondents, as can be seen in Figure 5.58 revealed that

they adapted their teaching methods to suit the learning needs of all children in the classroom, a positive indication that inclusion is possible in early childhood education teaching settings.

FIGURE 5.58 RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO REGION WHO ADAPTED THEIR TEACHING METHODS TO SUIT THE LEARNING NEEDS OF ALL CHILDREN



5.6.2 Teaching Children who need More Attention in Separate Groups

The majority of teachers said that they adapted their teaching methods to suit the individual learners' needs. A majority equally indicated that they preferred to teach children who needed more attention in separate groups as well as to work with them individually (see Figures 5.59 and 5.60).

FIGURE 5.59 RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO REGION WHO PREFERRED TO TEACH CHILDREN WHO NEED MORE ATTENTION IN SEPARATE GROUPS

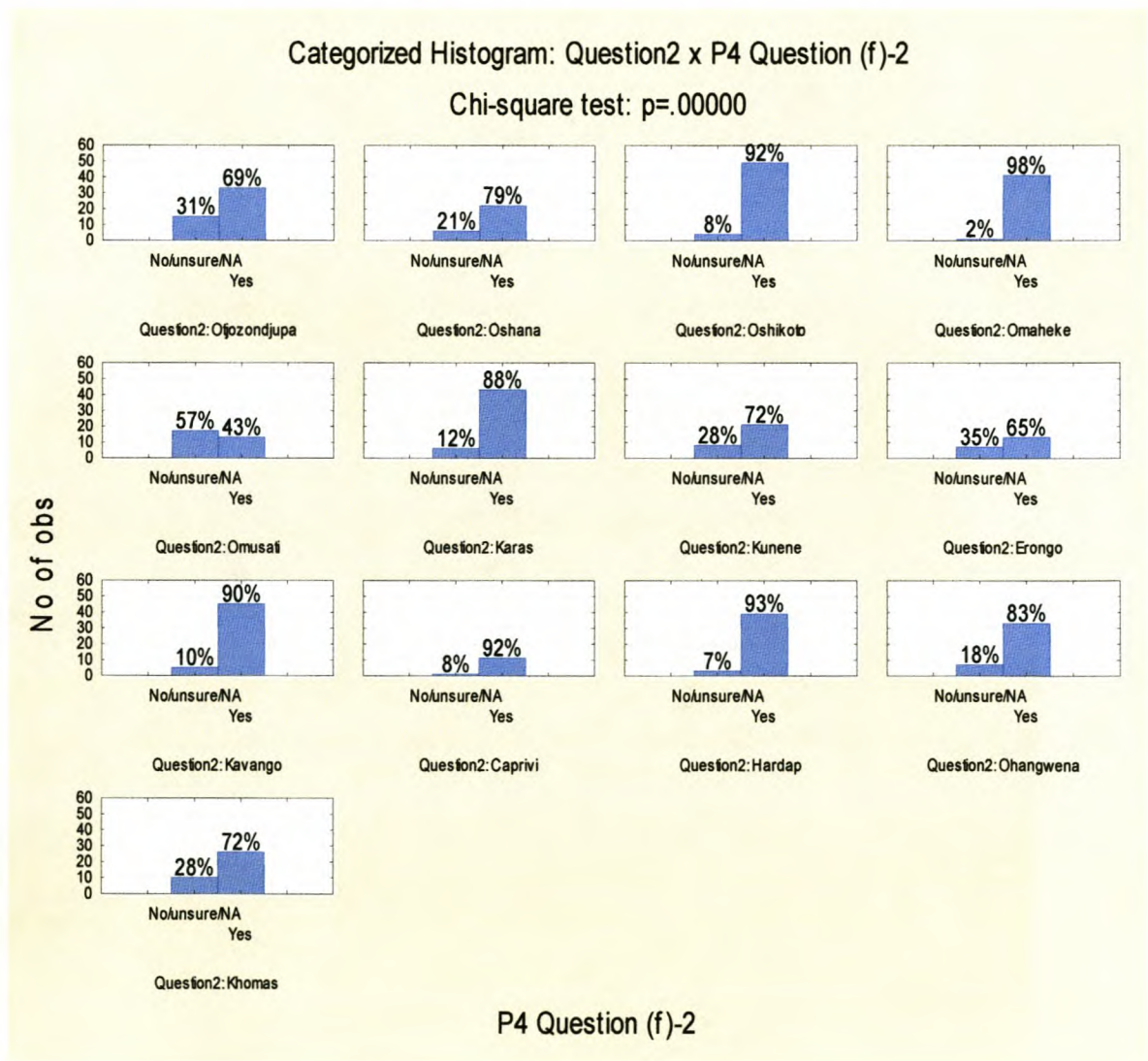
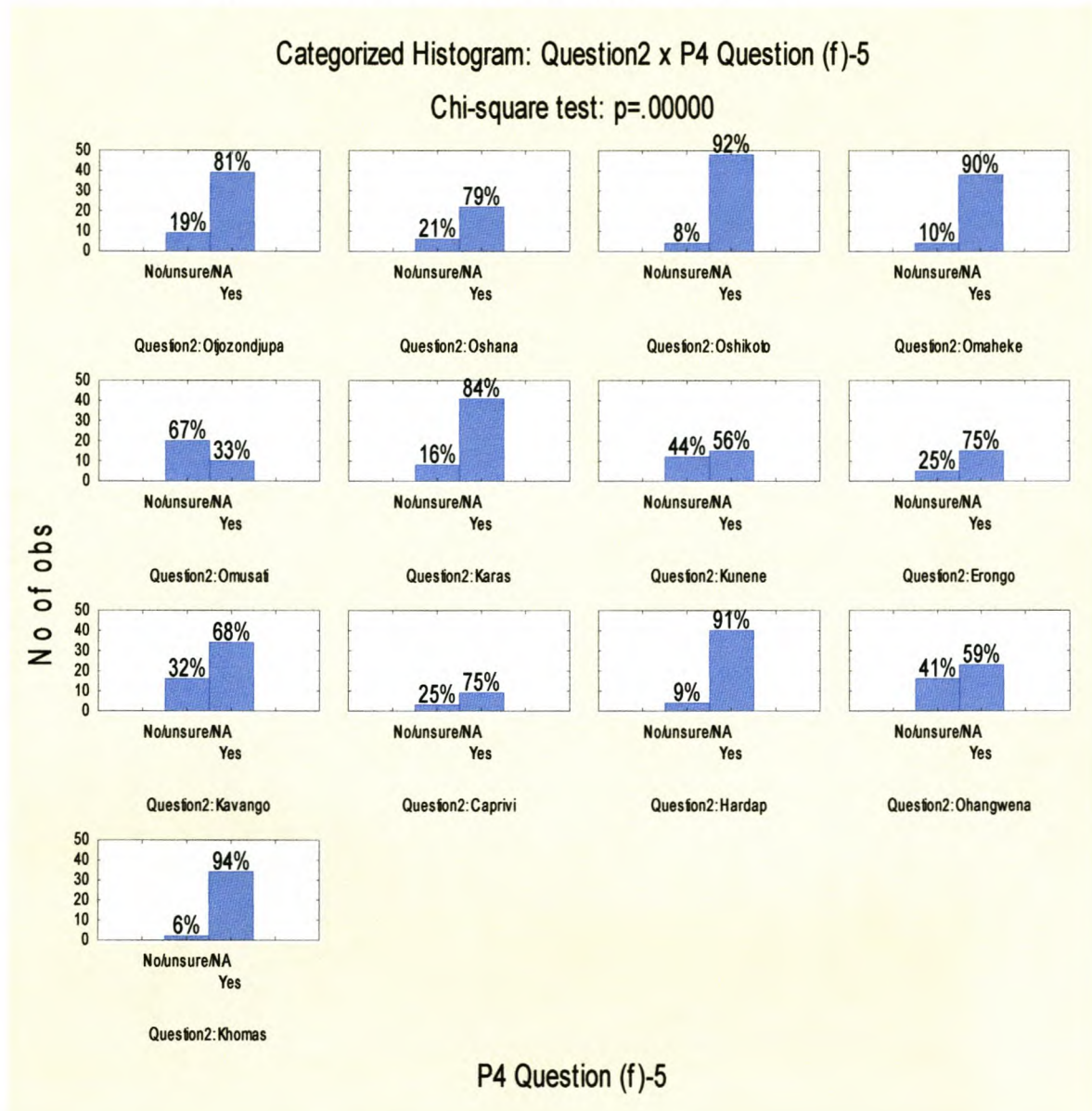


FIGURE 5.60 RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO REGION WHO PREFERRED TO WORK WITH CHILDREN INDIVIDUALLY

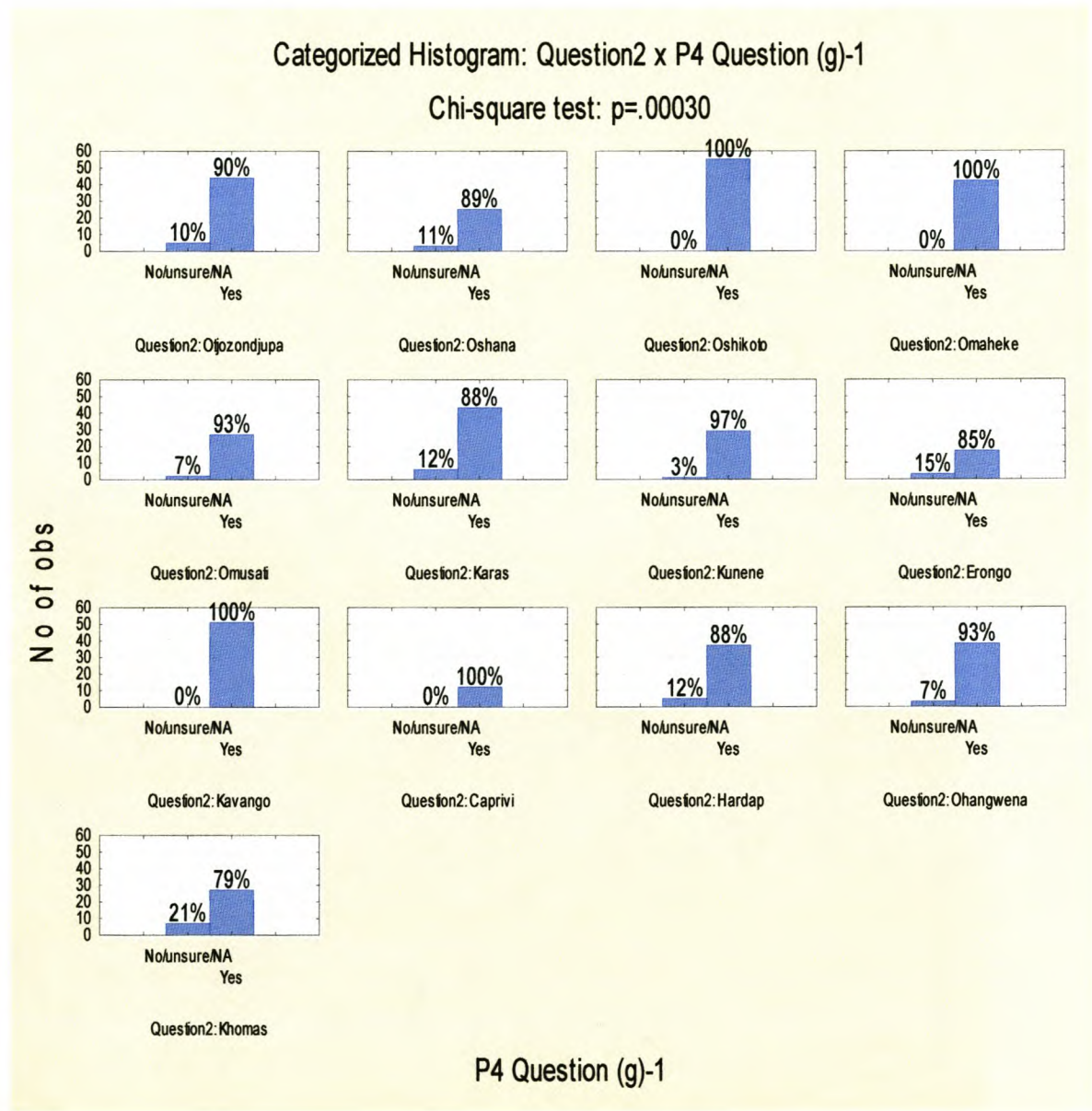


5.7 TEACHING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

The questions were asked in order to obtain views from early childhood educators about teaching children with disabilities in early childhood education centres in Namibia. The majority of the respondents indicated that they had no problem with children with disabilities attending early childhood education

centres. This is an indication that teachers in early childhood education centres are open to inclusive approaches to early childhood education (see Figure 5.61).

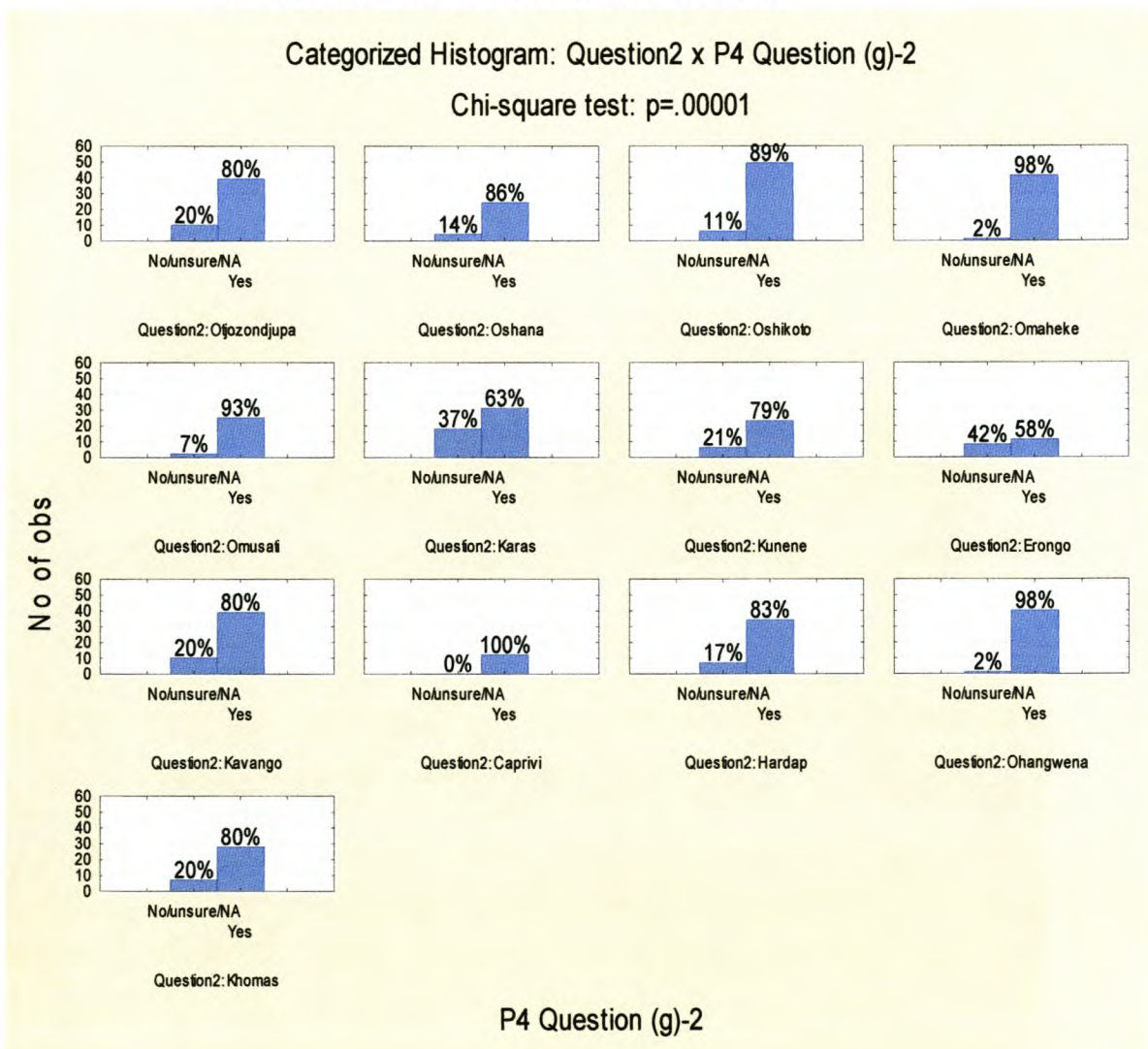
FIGURE 5.61 RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO REGION WHO AGREED THAT CHILDREN WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES SHOULD ATTEND ECD



5.7.1 Teaching Children with Disabilities in Regular Classes

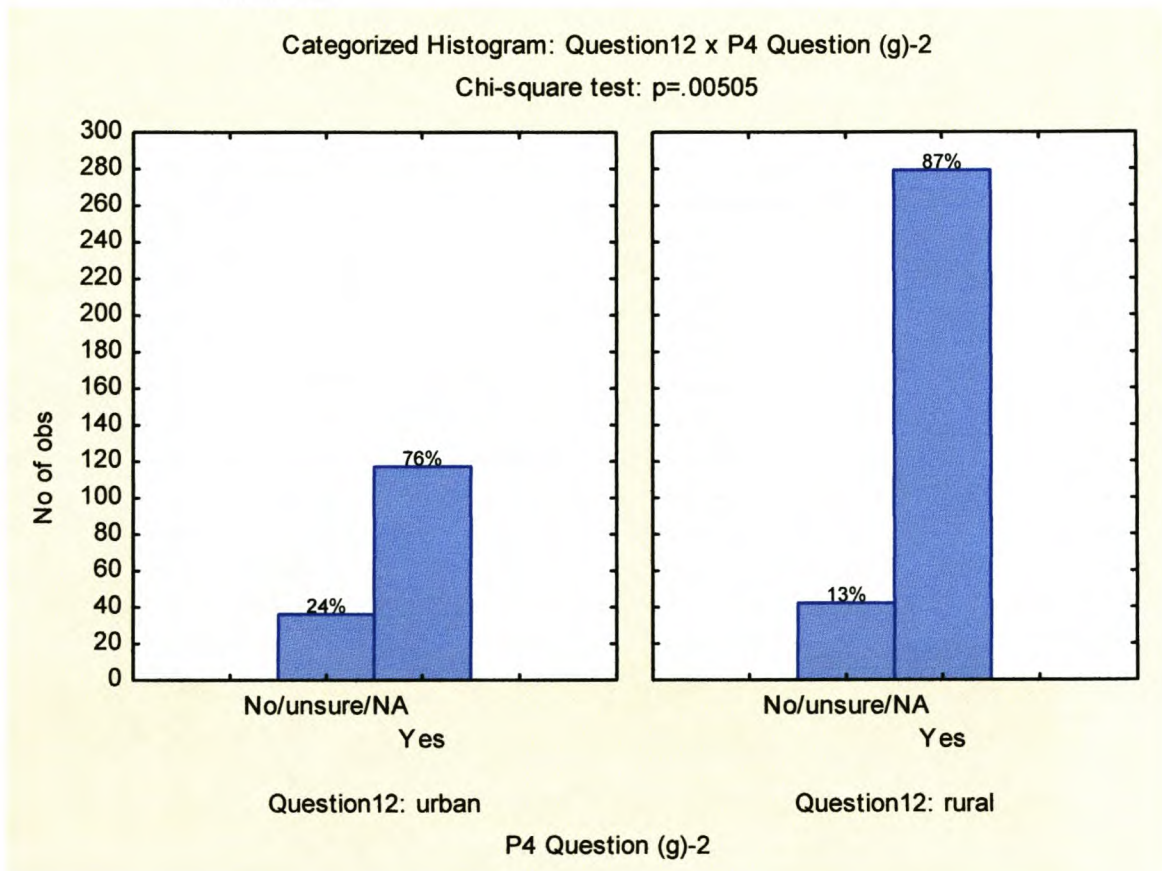
Teaching children with disabilities in the same classroom settings with their peers without disabilities was also regarded as contributing to reducing stereotypes amongst the children. Although the majority of the regions (Figure 5.62) had more than 80% of the respondents who agreed with the statement only 58% of the respondents from the Erongo region and 63% from the Karas region agreed that teaching children with disabilities with their peers without disabilities would avoid stereotyping.

FIGURE 5.62 TEACHING CHILDREN IN THE SAME CLASS HELPS AVOIDING STEREOTYPES BY REGION



While 87% of the respondents from rural areas indicated that children with disabilities should be taught in the same class with their peers to avoid stereotypes, only 76% of the respondents from urban areas supported this view (Figure 5.63).

FIGURE 5.63 TEACHING CHILDREN IN THE SAME CLASS HELPS AVOIDING STEREOTYPES BETWEEN URBAN AND RURAL AREAS

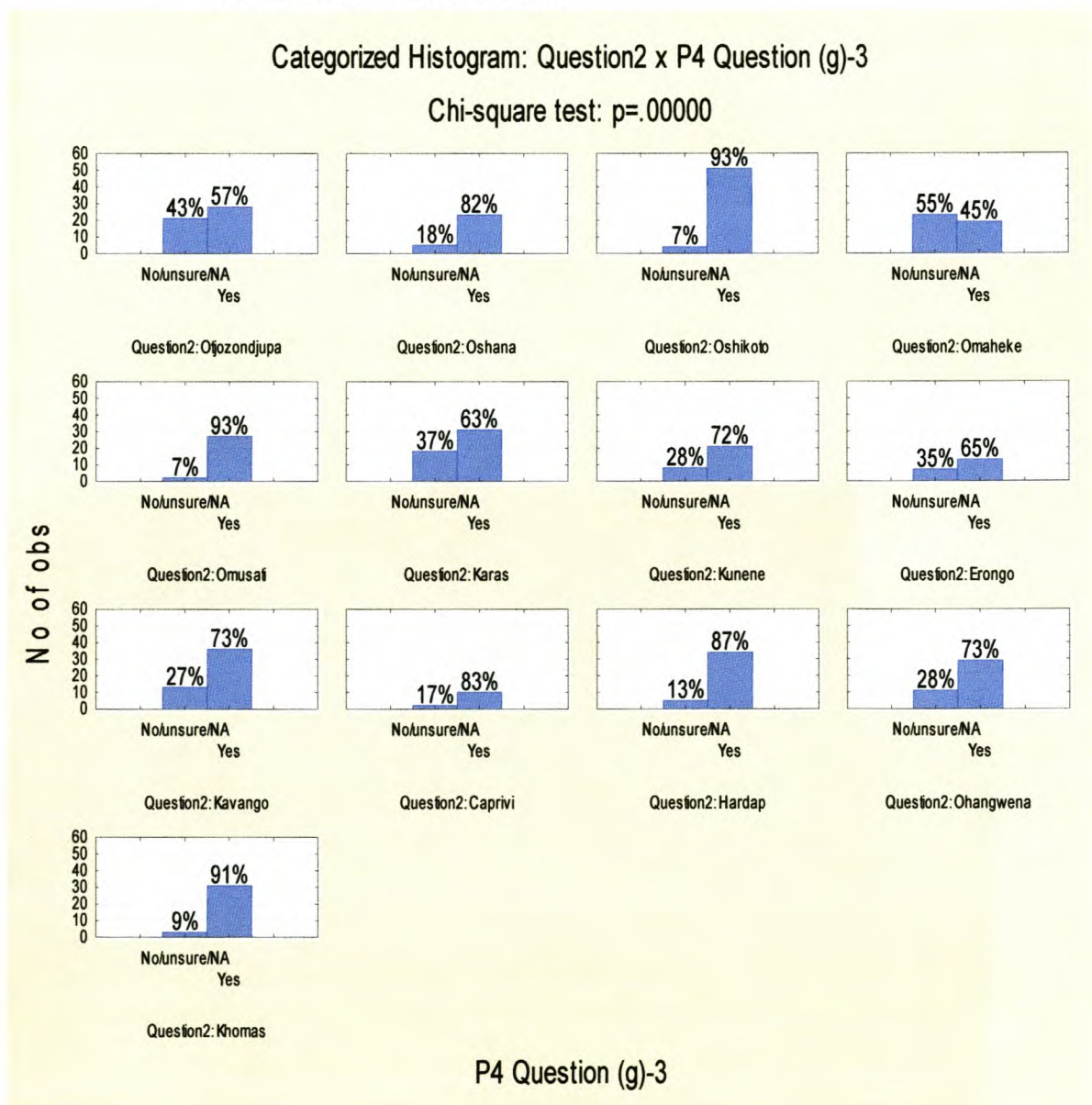


5.7.2 Coping with Teaching Children with Disabilities

With regard to coping with children with various disabilities, Figure 5.64 reveals that whereas more early childhood educators coped with teaching children with various abilities, there were also many who indicated the opposite. For, example, only 45% of the respondents from the Omaheke region and 57% from the

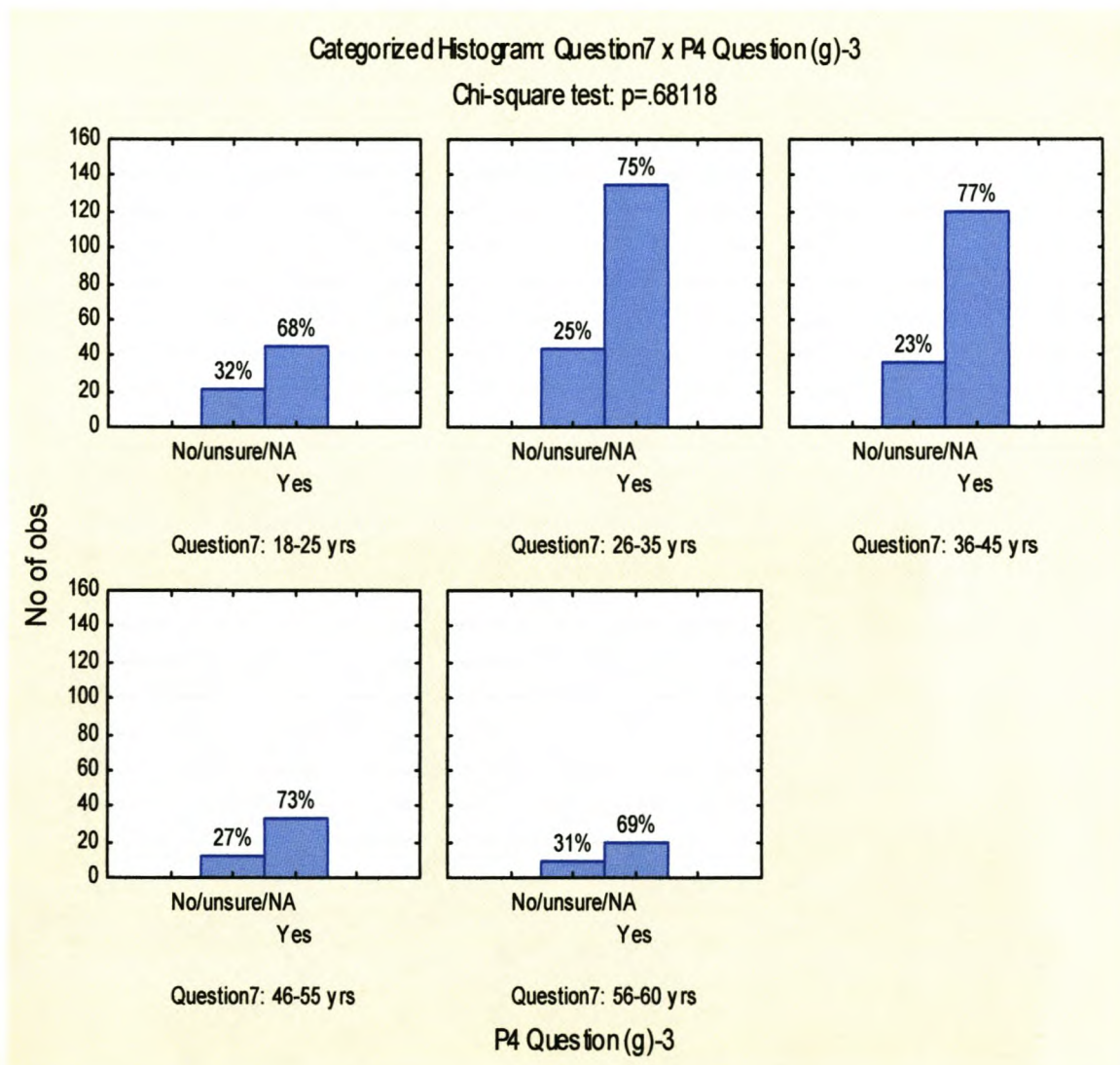
Otjozondjupa regions said that they coped with teaching children with various abilities. However, what is interesting about these findings is that, in figure 5.58 for example, 98% of the respondents from the Otjozondjupa region had indicated that they adapted their teaching styles to suit the learning needs of all children. The assumption is that the early childhood educators are not well informed about inclusion and inclusive education in early childhood education.

FIGURE 5.64 COPING WITH CHILDREN WITH VARIOUS ABILITIES IN THE SAME CLASS BY REGION



Variations were recorded amongst the different age groups. While 68% and 69% of respondents from the age group of 18 to 25 years and 56 to 60 years, respectively, revealed that they could cope with teaching children of various abilities in the same class, over 70% of the respondents in the category in-between indicated that they could cope with having children with various abilities in the same class (see Figure 5.65).

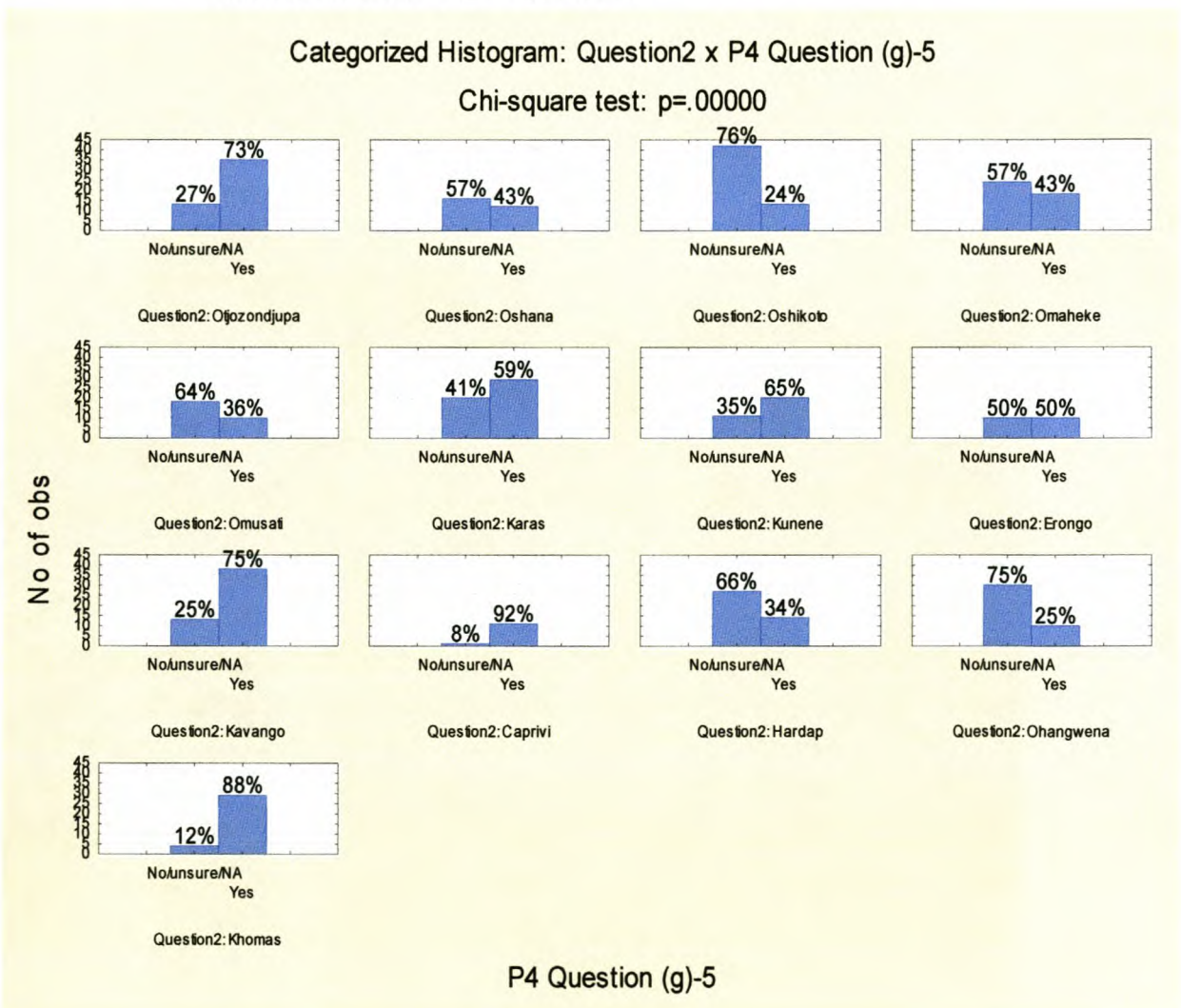
FIGURE 5.65 COPING WITH CHILDREN WITH VARIOUS ABILITIES IN THE SAME CLASS BY AGE GROUP



5.7.3 Teaching Children with Different Language Backgrounds

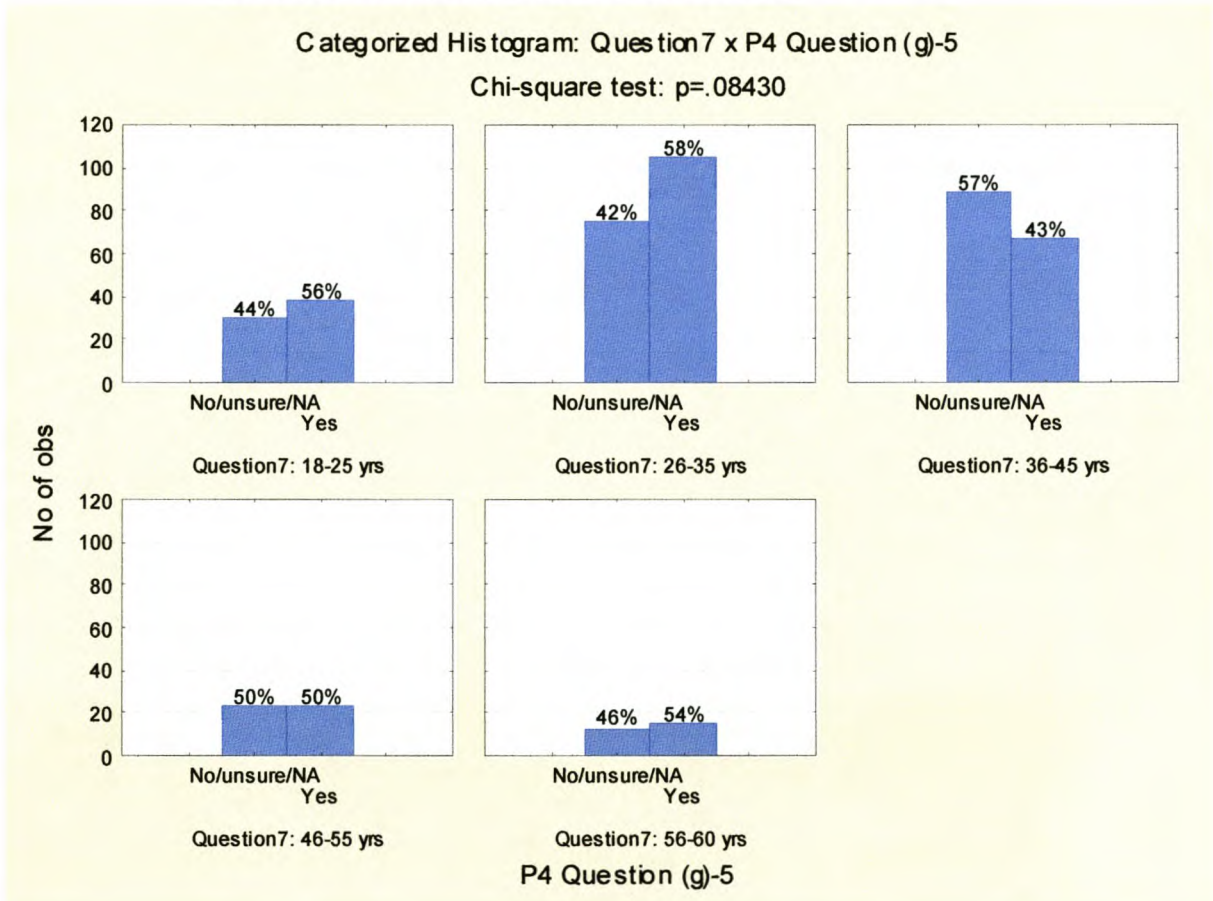
Figure 5.66 reveals that many early childhood educators in Namibia were still not confident about teaching children who come from different language backgrounds. This suggests that cultural inclusion is still not a reality in an independent Namibia. The Oshikoto region showed a higher percentage of respondents (76%) who indicated that it was not easy to teach children from different language backgrounds, followed by the Ohangwena region with 75%. Only half of the respondents from the Erongo region said that they thought it was easy to teach a class with children from different language backgrounds.

FIGURE 5.67 TEACHING CHILDREN WITH DIFFERENT LANGUAGE BACKGROUNDS BY REGION



While 58% of teachers from the age category 26 to 35 thought it was easy to teach a class with children from different language backgrounds, 57% of respondents between the age group 36 to 45 thought the opposite (see Figure 5.67).

FIGURE 5.67 TEACHING CHILDREN WITH DIFFERENT LANGUAGE BACKGROUNDS BY AGE CATEGORY



5.7.4 Qualifications to Teach Children with Different Needs

Figure 5.68 reveals that significantly more teachers in early childhood education did not have the proper qualifications to teach children with different needs in early childhood education in Namibia. Over 80% of respondents from the Otjozondjupa, Omusati, Kavango and Ohangwena region revealed that they did

not have the right qualifications to teach children with different needs. In total, 62% female and 76% of the male respondents indicated that they did not have the right qualifications to teach children with different needs in education (see Figure 5.68).

FIGURE 5.68 RIGHT QUALIFICATION TO TEACH CHILDREN WITH DIFFERENT NEEDS BY REGION

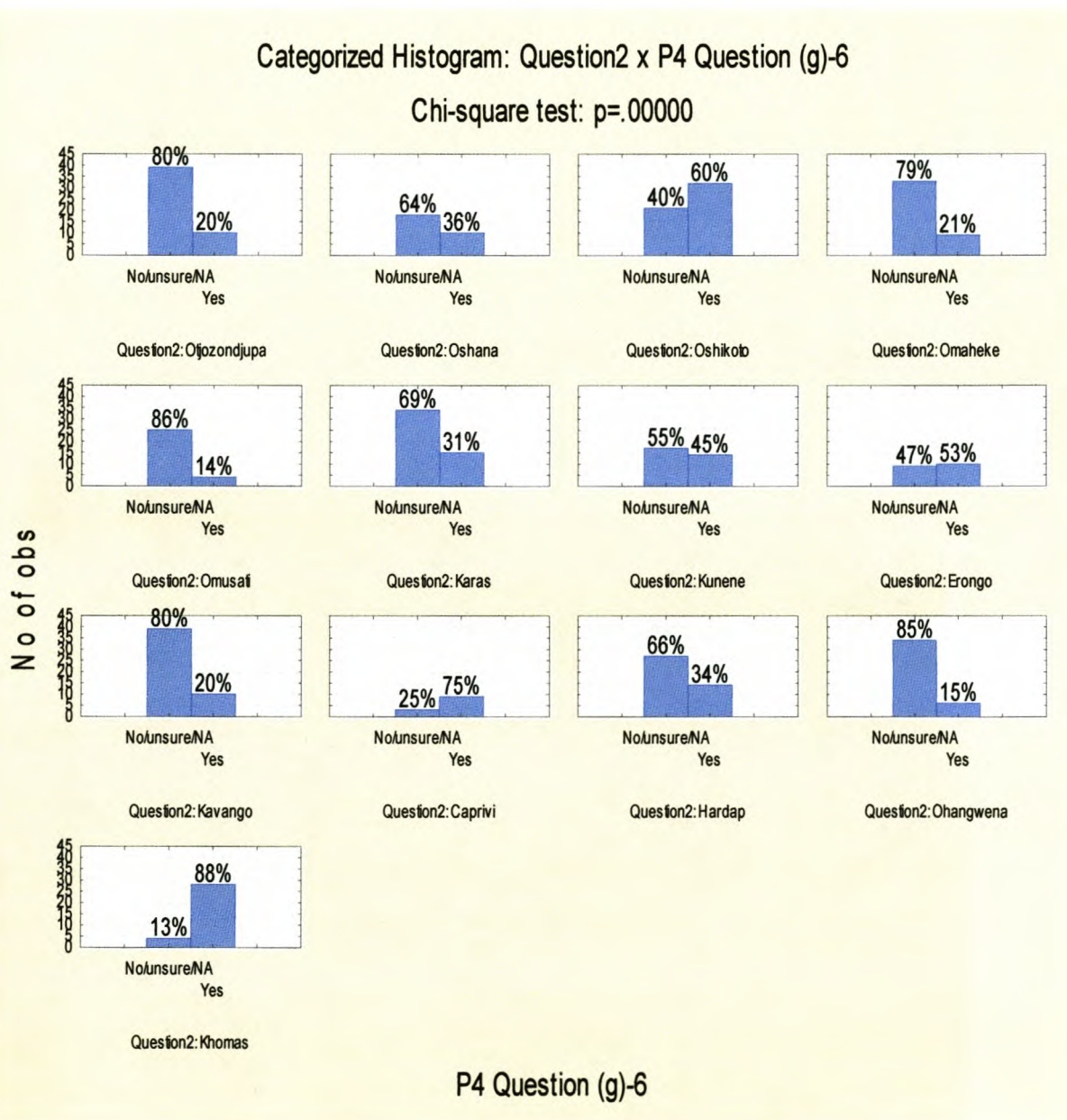
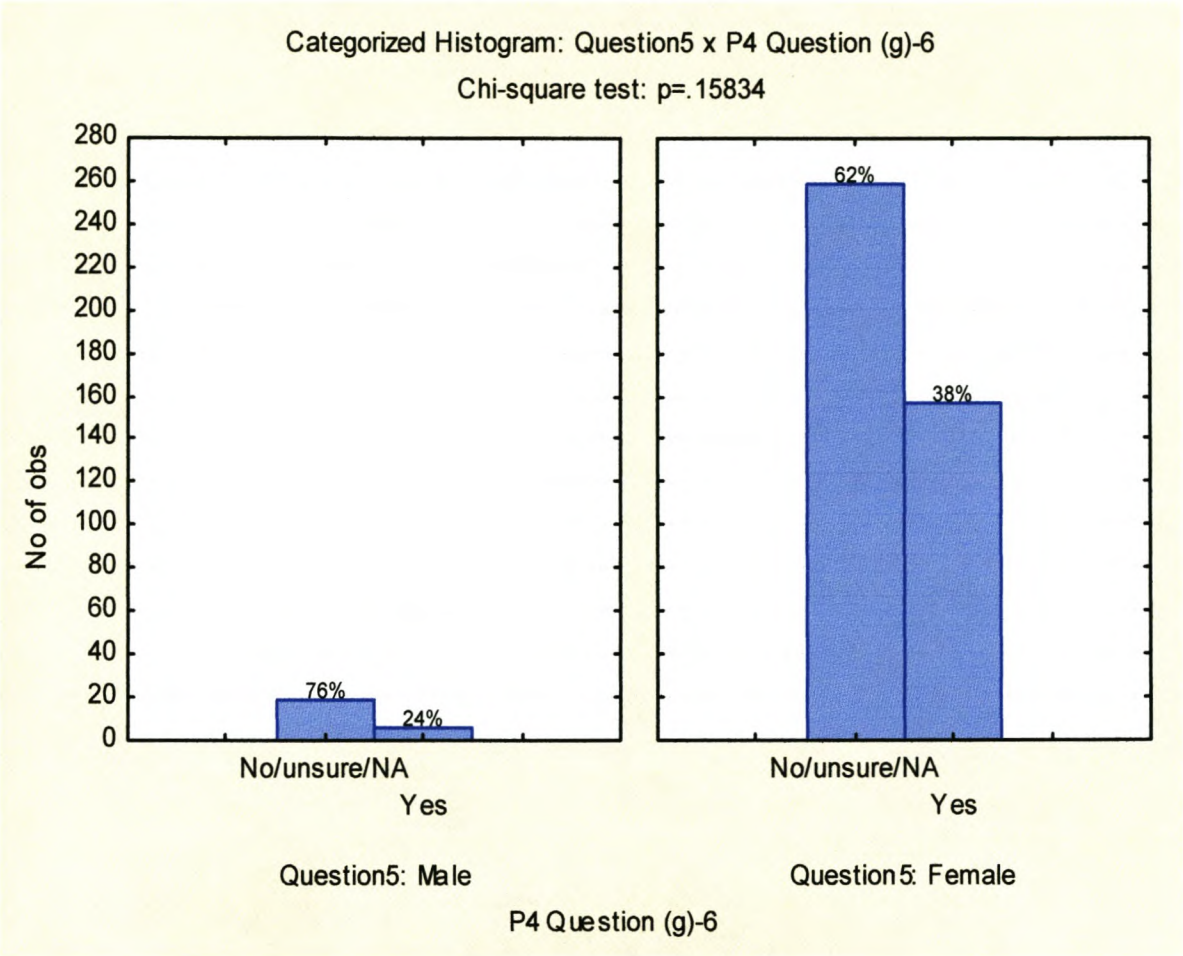
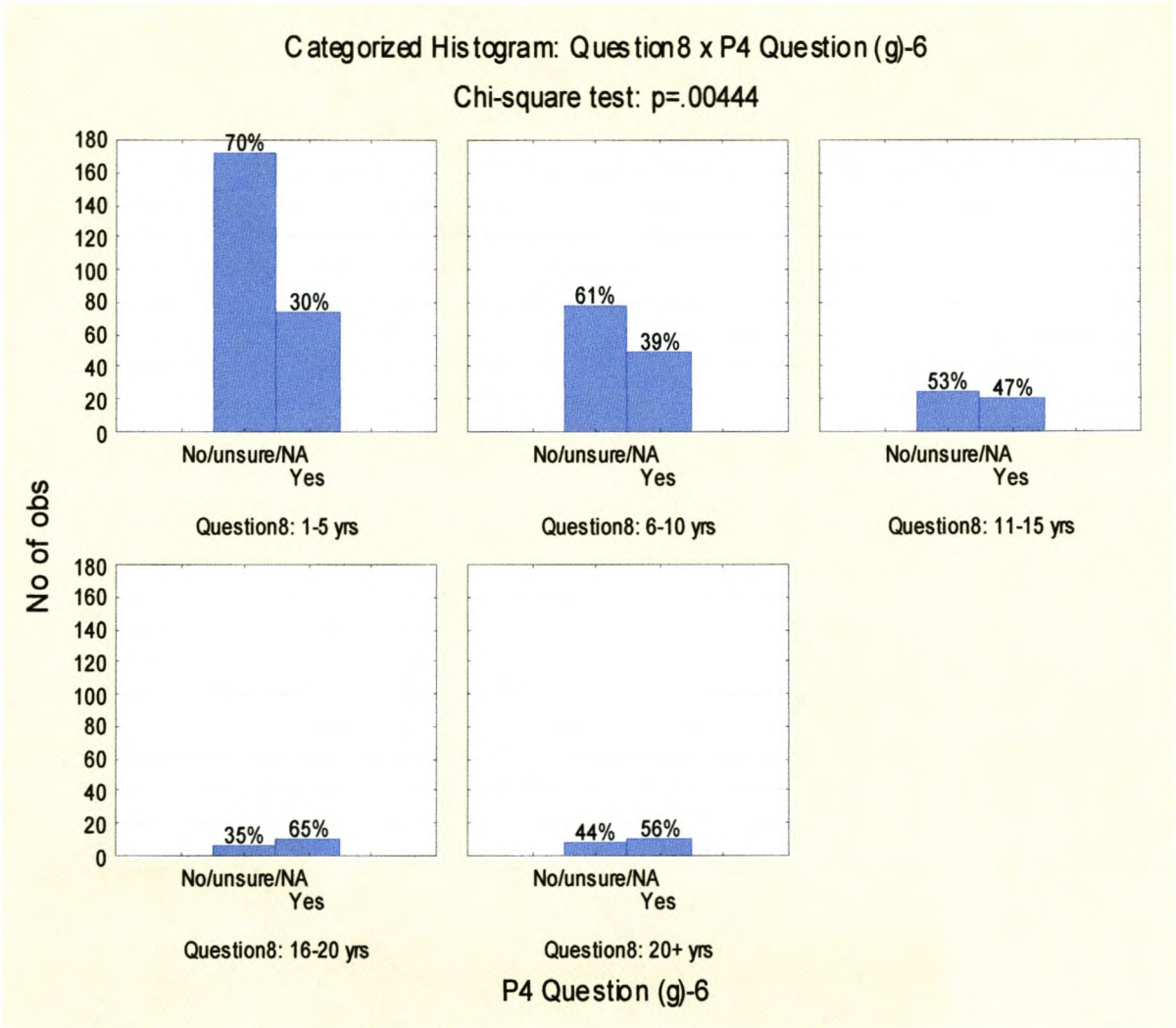


FIGURE 5.69 RIGHT QUALIFICATION TO TEACH CHILDREN WITH DIFFERENT NEEDS BY GENDER



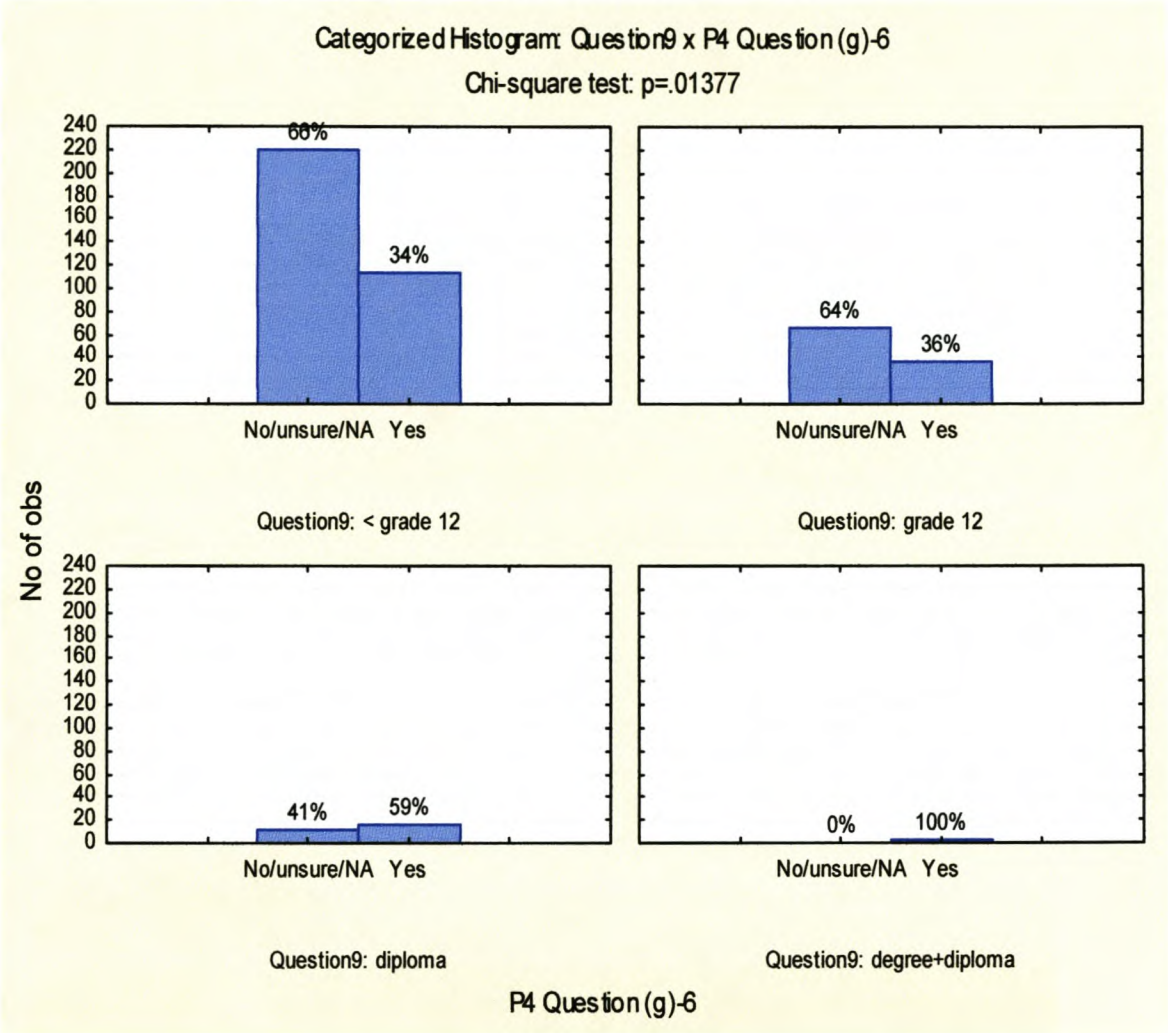
Interestingly, Figure 5.70 revealed that the majority of teachers with more years of teaching experience (16 to 20 years and more than 20 years) indicated that they had the right qualifications to teach children with different needs compared to their counterparts with fewer years of teaching experience.

FIGURE 5.70 RIGHT QUALIFICATION TO TEACH CHILDREN WITH DIFFERENT NEEDS EXPERIENCE



The majority of the teachers did not feel they did not have the right qualification to teach children with different needs in education (over 60% of teachers with less than a Degree, and 59% of the teachers with a Diploma).

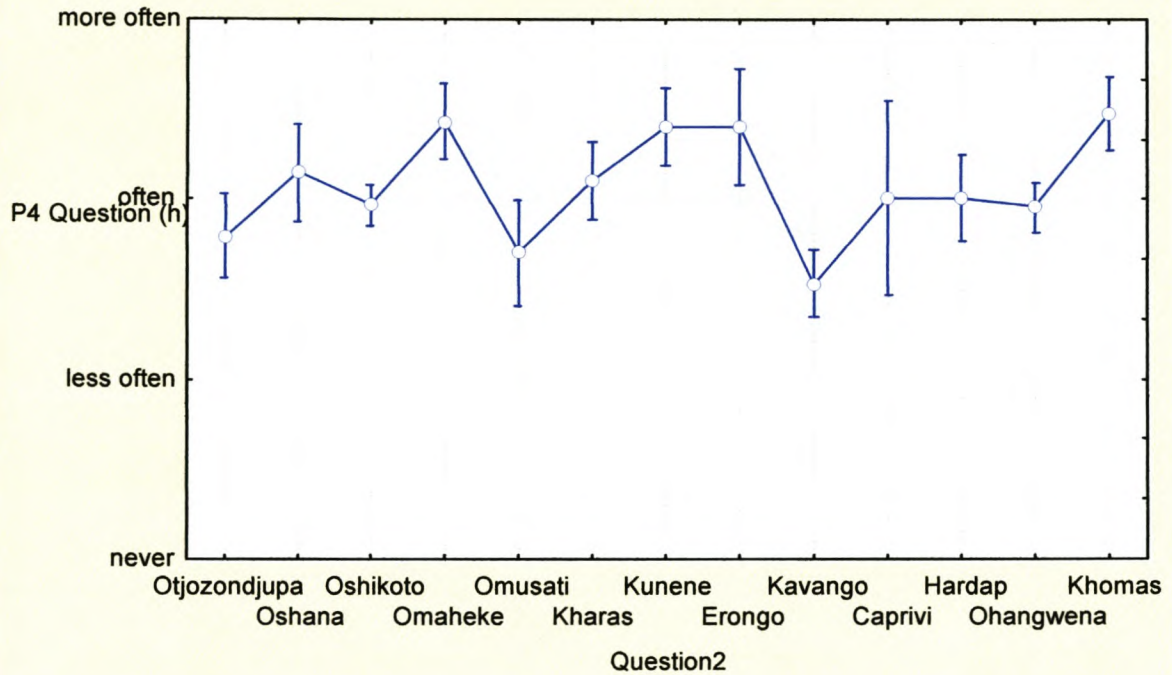
FIGURE 5.71 RIGHT QUALIFICATION TO TEACH CHILDREN WITH DIFFERENT NEEDS BY QUALIFICATION



5.7.5 Meetings between Parents and ECD educators

There were some regional variations with regard to how often parents and teachers met to discuss the education and health concerns of their children. While parents and teachers from the Khomas Region met fairly often with ECD educators, parents and ECD educators from the Kavango, Omusati and Otjozondjupa regions met less often with the ECD educators (see Figure 5.72).

FIGURE 5.72 MEETINGS BETWEEN PARENTS AND ECD EDUCATORS



5.8 SOURCE OF SUPPORT

The question was asked in order to establish the nature of support provided for early childhood education by the government, parents and communities, individuals, churches and the private sector.

5.8.1 Government

It is clear from the data (see Figures 5.73 and 5.74) that early childhood education does not receive any financial contribution from the government, with the exception of the Hardap, Karas, Otjozondjupa, Erongo, Kavango and Omaheke regions.

FIGURE 5.73 FINANCIAL SUPPORT PROVIDED BY THE MWACW TO ECD CENTRES

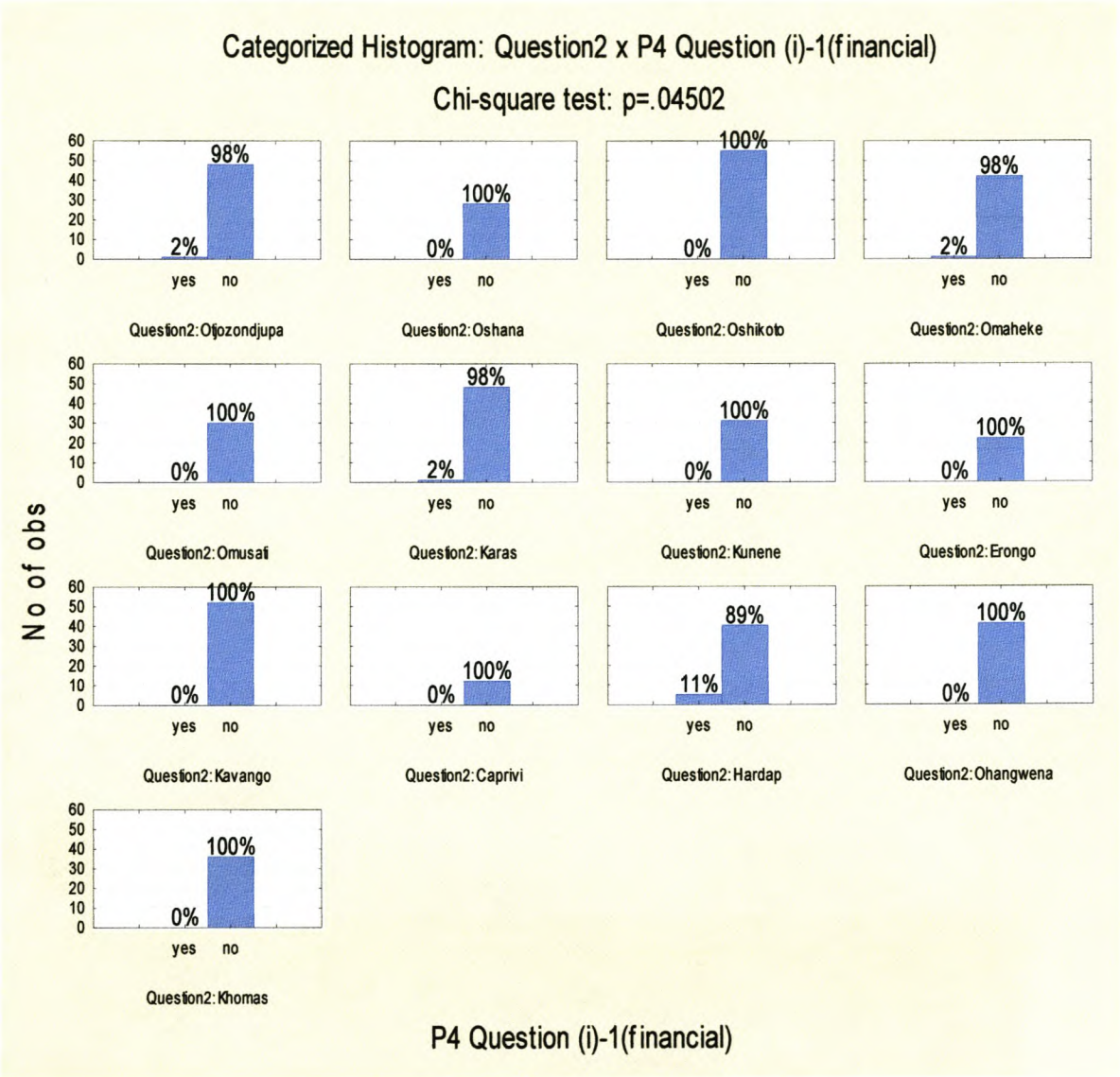
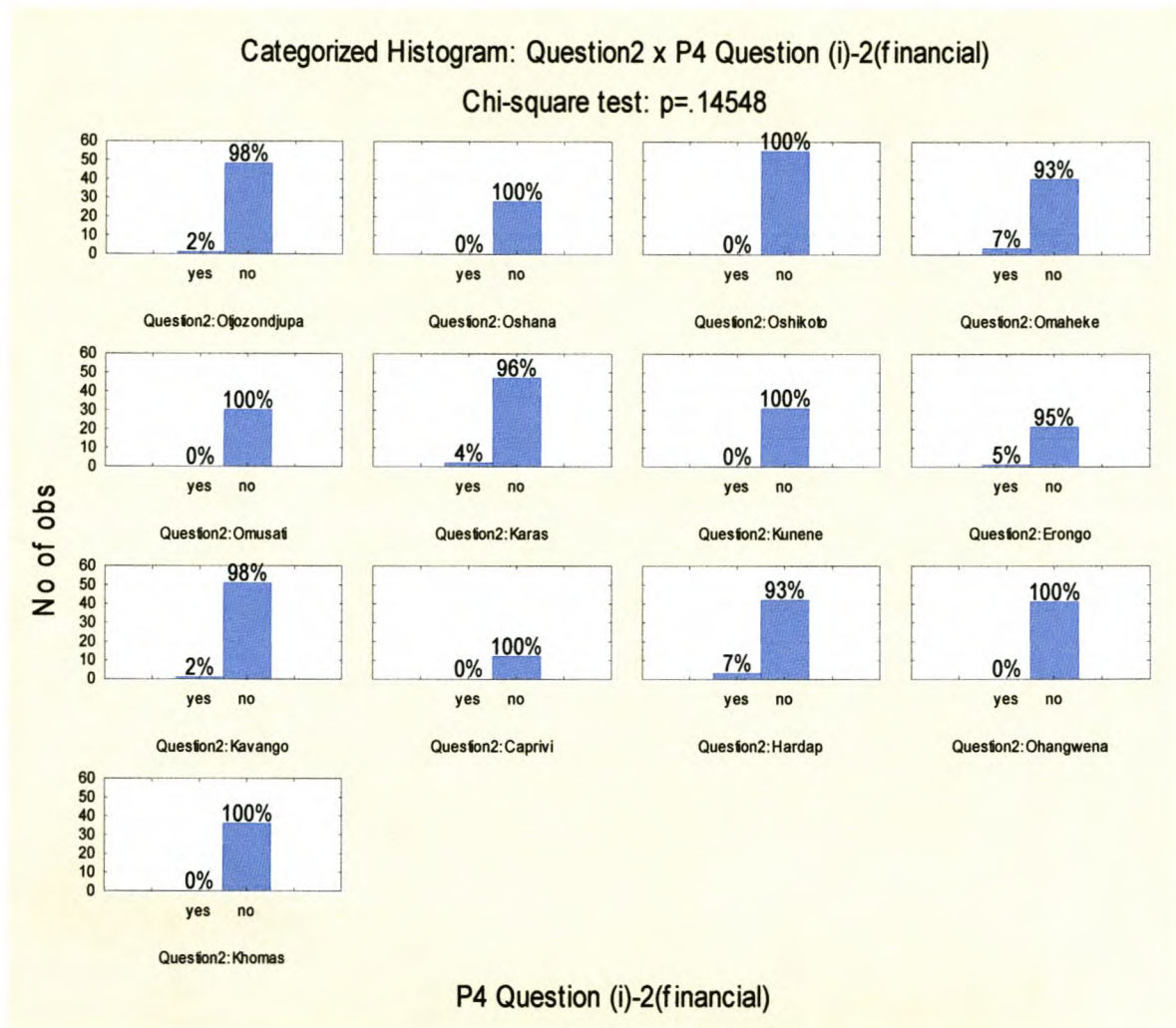


FIGURE 5.74 FINANCIAL SUPPORT PROVIDED MBESC TO ECD CENTRES



5.8.2 Parents and Community

Figures 5.75 and 5.76 reveal that parents and the community were providing more financial assistance to early childhood education in Namibia. All respondents from the Caprivi region indicated that parents and community were contributing financially to ECD in that region, followed by 90% of the respondents from the Oshikoto region. The total percentage of male respondents who revealed that they received financial support from parents and communities is 69% compared to 79% of the male respondents.

FIGURE 5.75 FINANCIAL SUPPORT PROVIDED TO ECD CENTRES BY PARENTS AND COMMUNITIES

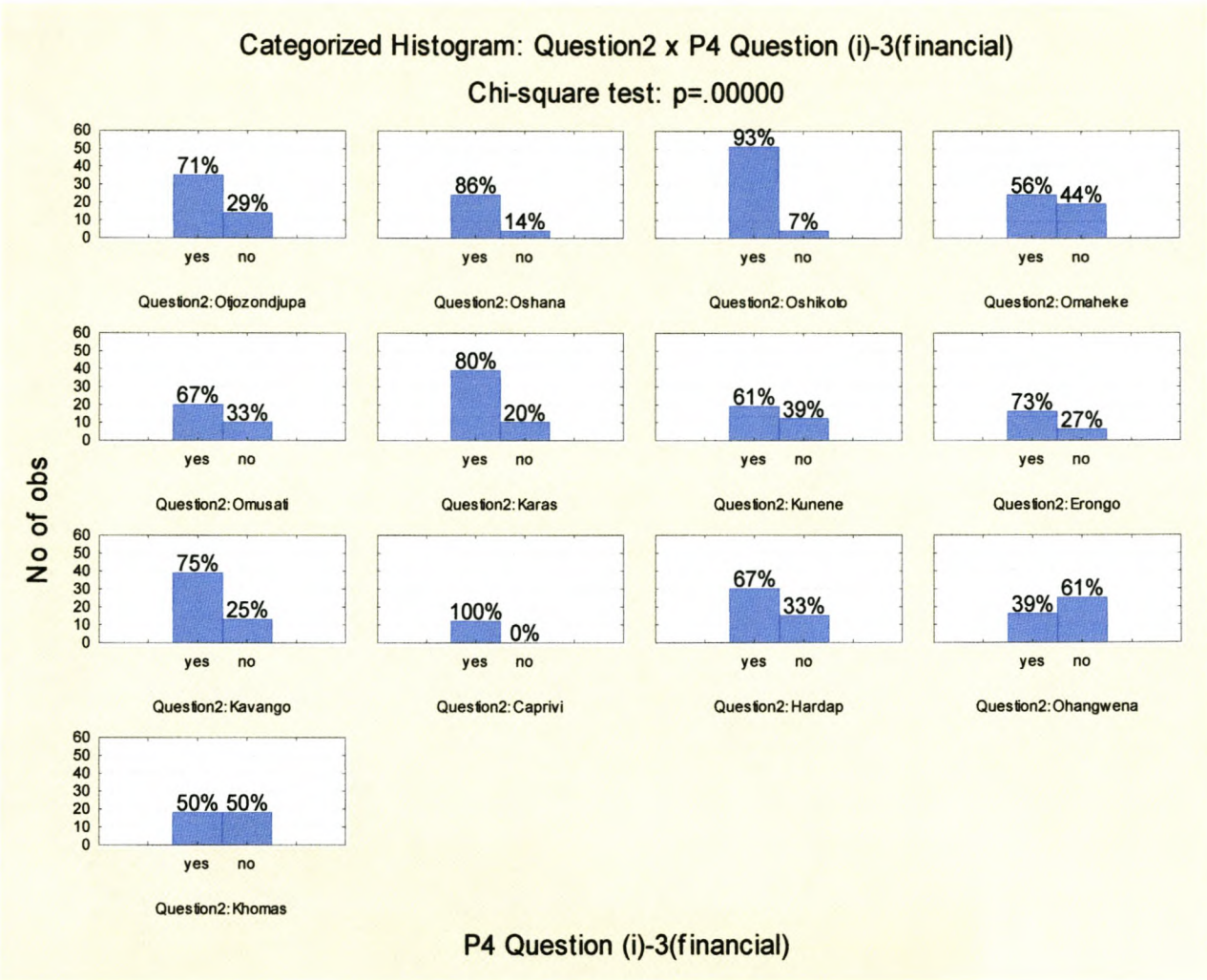
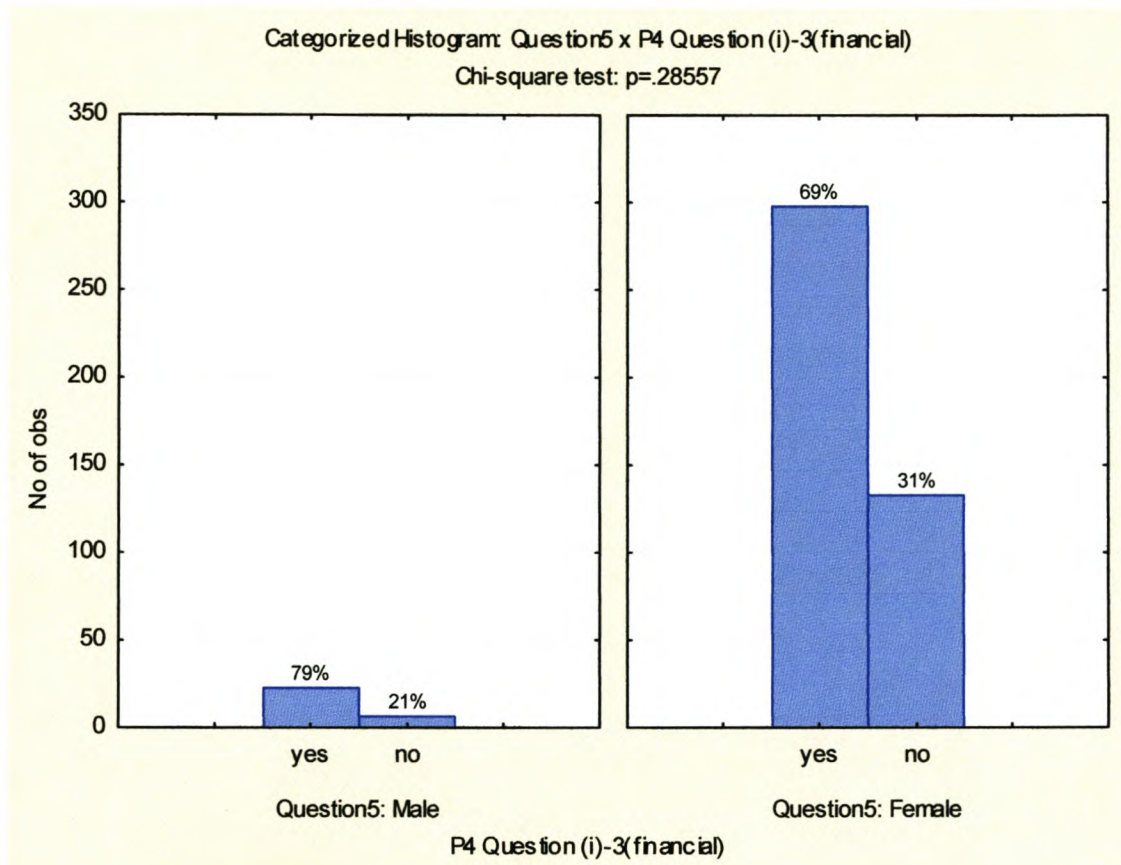


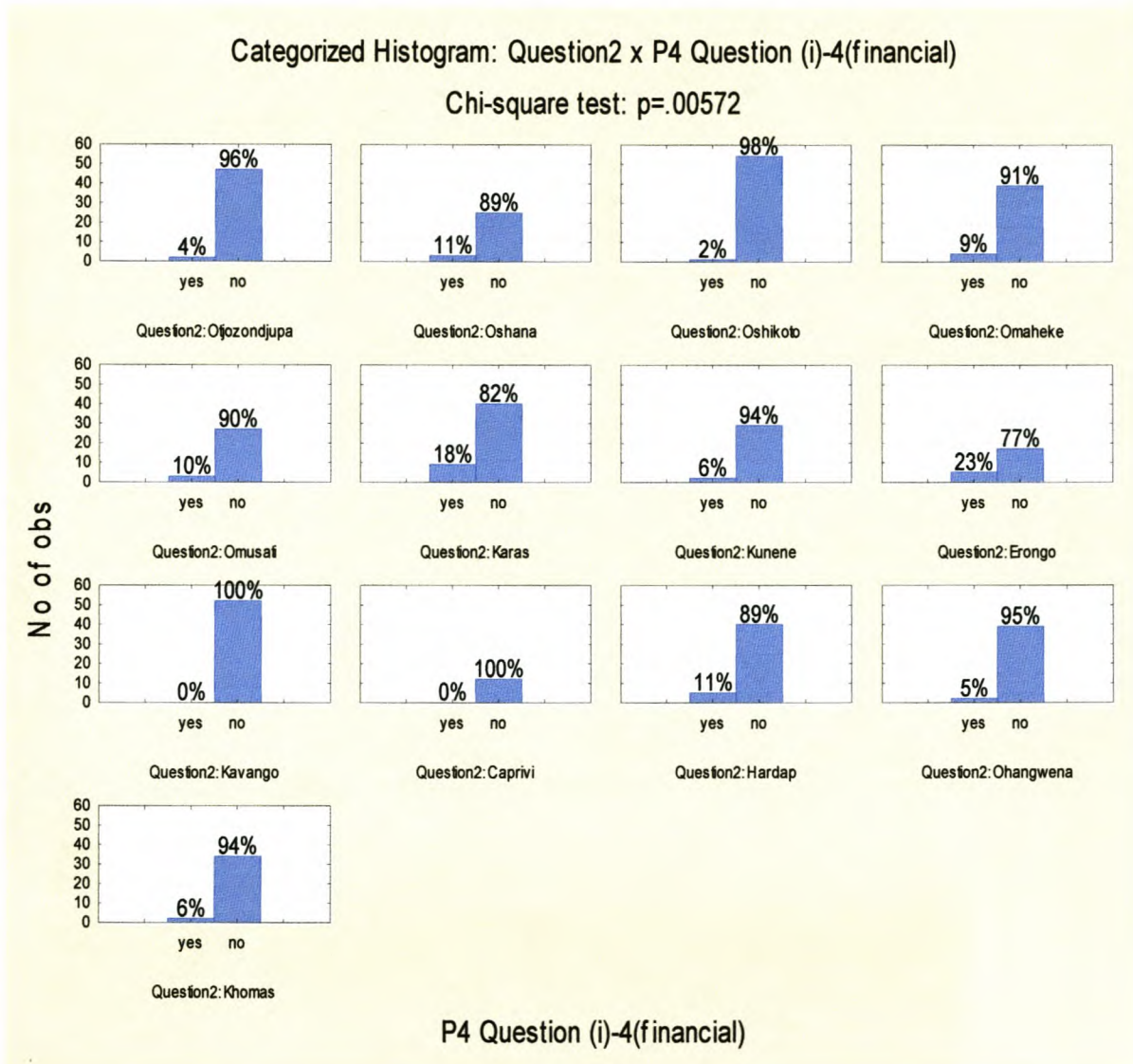
FIGURE 5.76 FINANCIAL SUPPORT PROVIDED TO ECD CENTRES BY GENDER



5.8.3 Private Sector

The private sector does not play its development role in support to early childhood education in Namibia. Figure 5.77 revealed that the majority of regions did not benefit from any financial support from the private sector for early childhood education programmes. All the respondents (100%) from the Caprivi and Kavango regions indicated that the private sector did not make any financial contributions to early childhood education.

FIGURE 5.77 FINANCIAL SUPPORT PROVIDED TO ECD CENTRES BY PRIVATE SECTOR

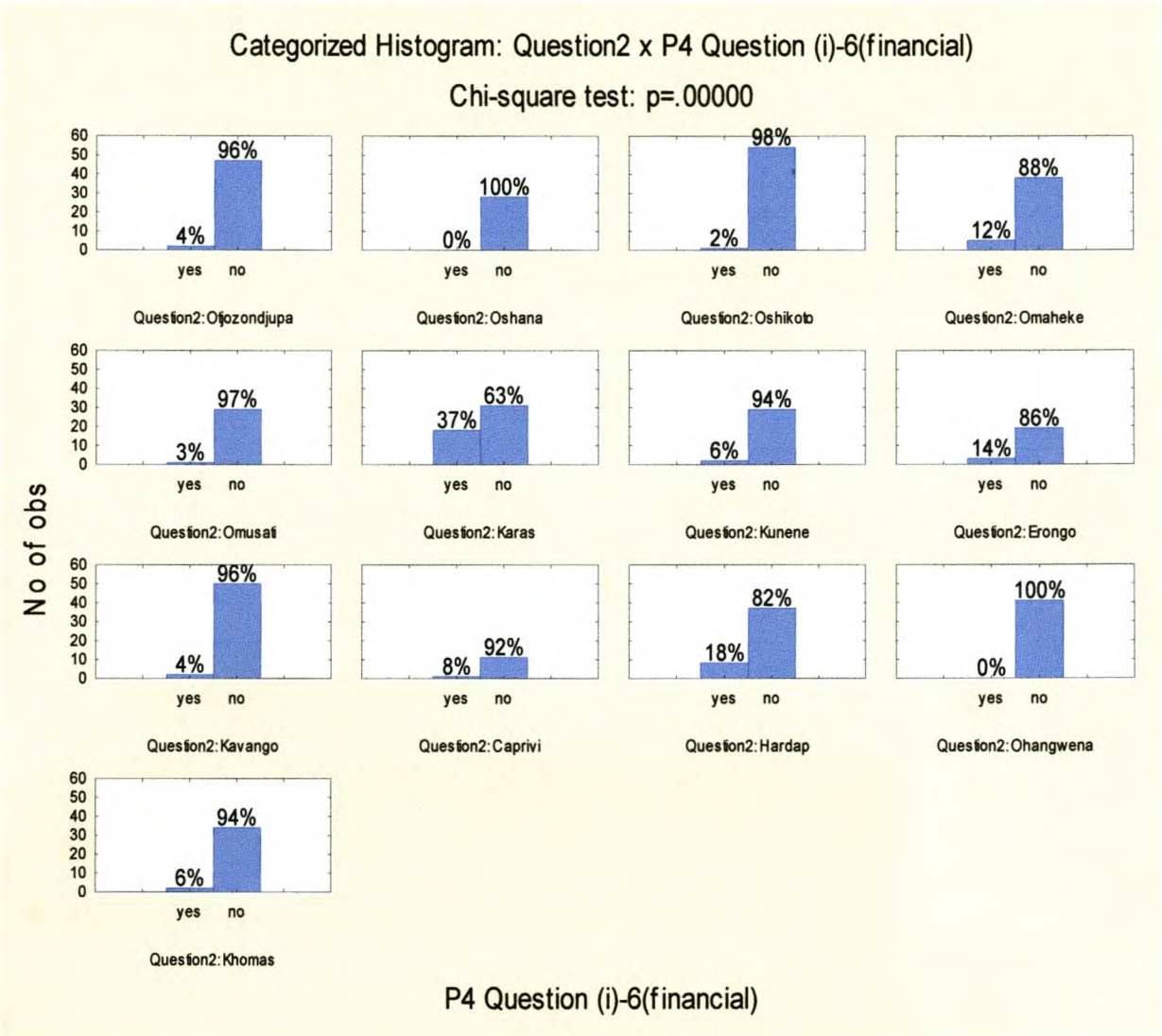


5.8.4 Churches

Surprisingly, the data in Figure 5.78 revealed that early childhood education in Namibia does also not receive financial assistance from the churches. All the respondents (100%) from the Oshana and Ohangwena region revealed that they did not receive any contribution from churches, by contrast with only 37% of the respondents from the Karas region indicating that they received financial

assistance from the churches.

FIGURE 5.78 FINANCIAL SUPPORT PROVIDED TO ECD CENTRES BY CHURCHES



5.8.5 Technical Support

There were some variations amongst respondents with regard to whether early childhood education centres received any technical assistance from the Ministry of Women Affairs and Child Welfare and the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport

and Culture. While 100% of the respondents from the Caprivi Region and Erongo regions revealed that they received no technical support from the MWACW, the same percentage of respondents from the Caprivi region confirmed the same with regard to the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture. The Omusati region had 50% of the respondents who revealed that they benefited from technical support from the MWACW while the same percentage of respondents from the Kavango region indicated the same with regard to the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture (see Figures 5.79 and 5.80).

FIGURE 5.79 TECHNICAL SUPPORT PROVIDED TO ECD CENTRES BY REGION MWACW

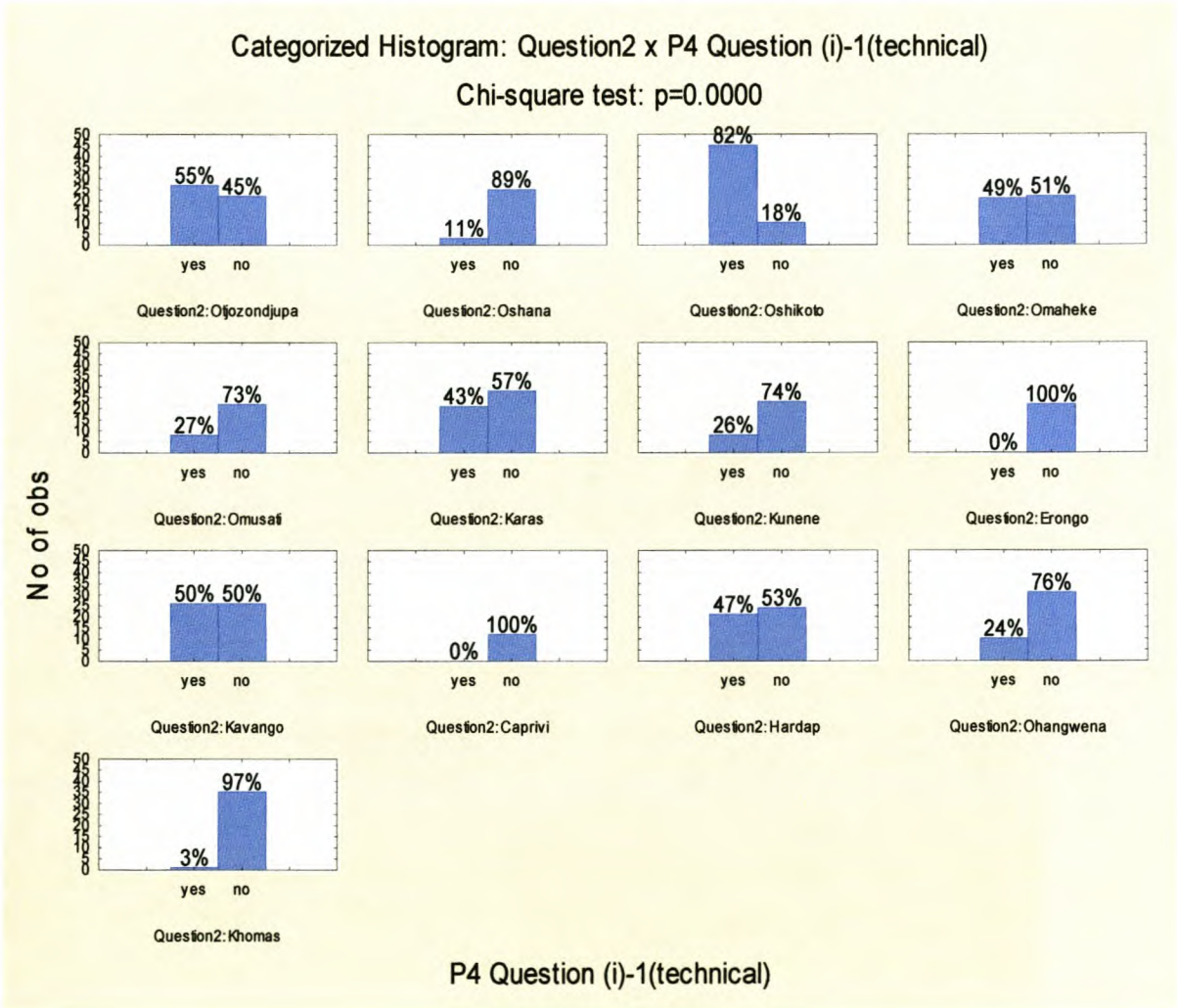
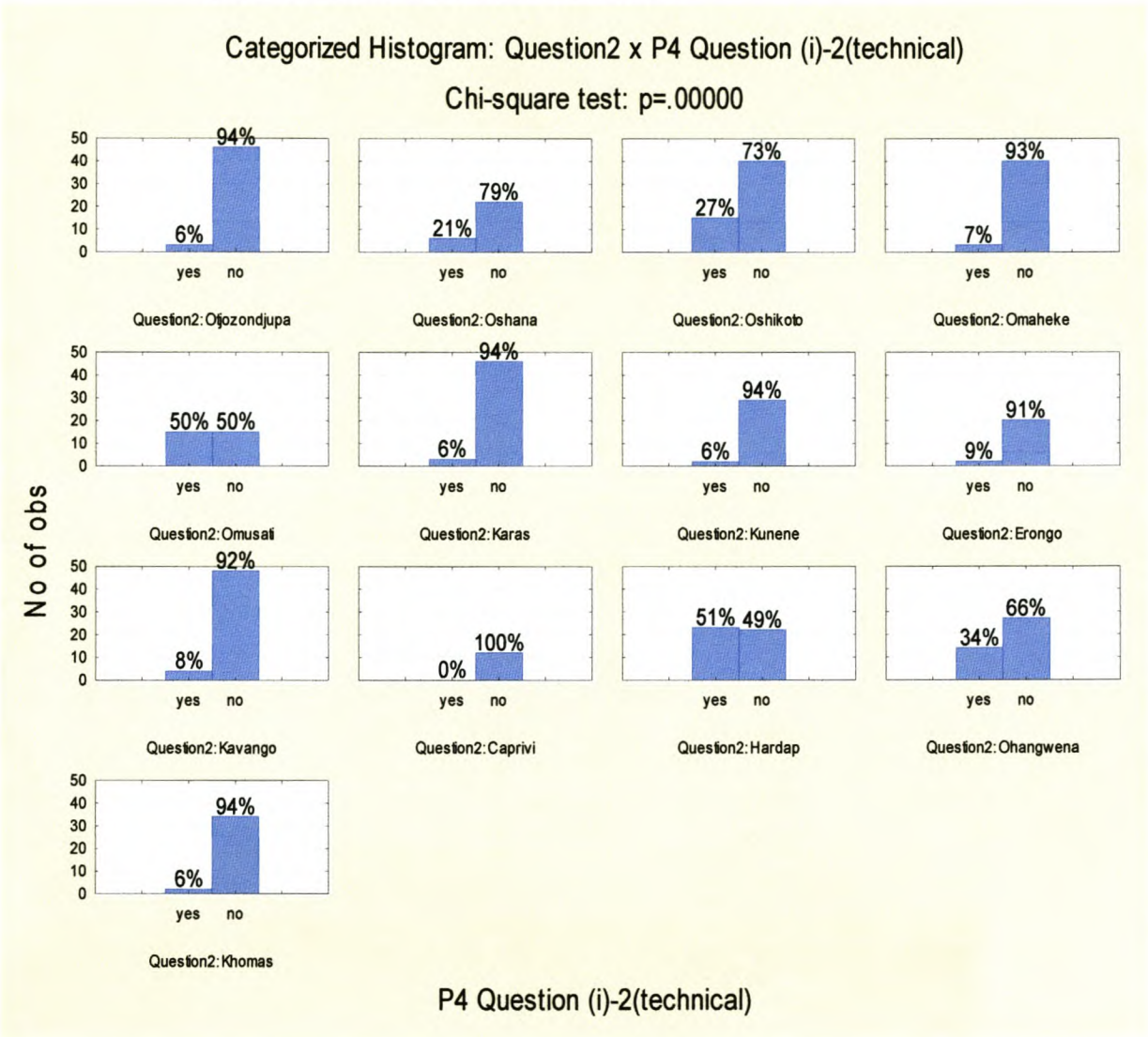
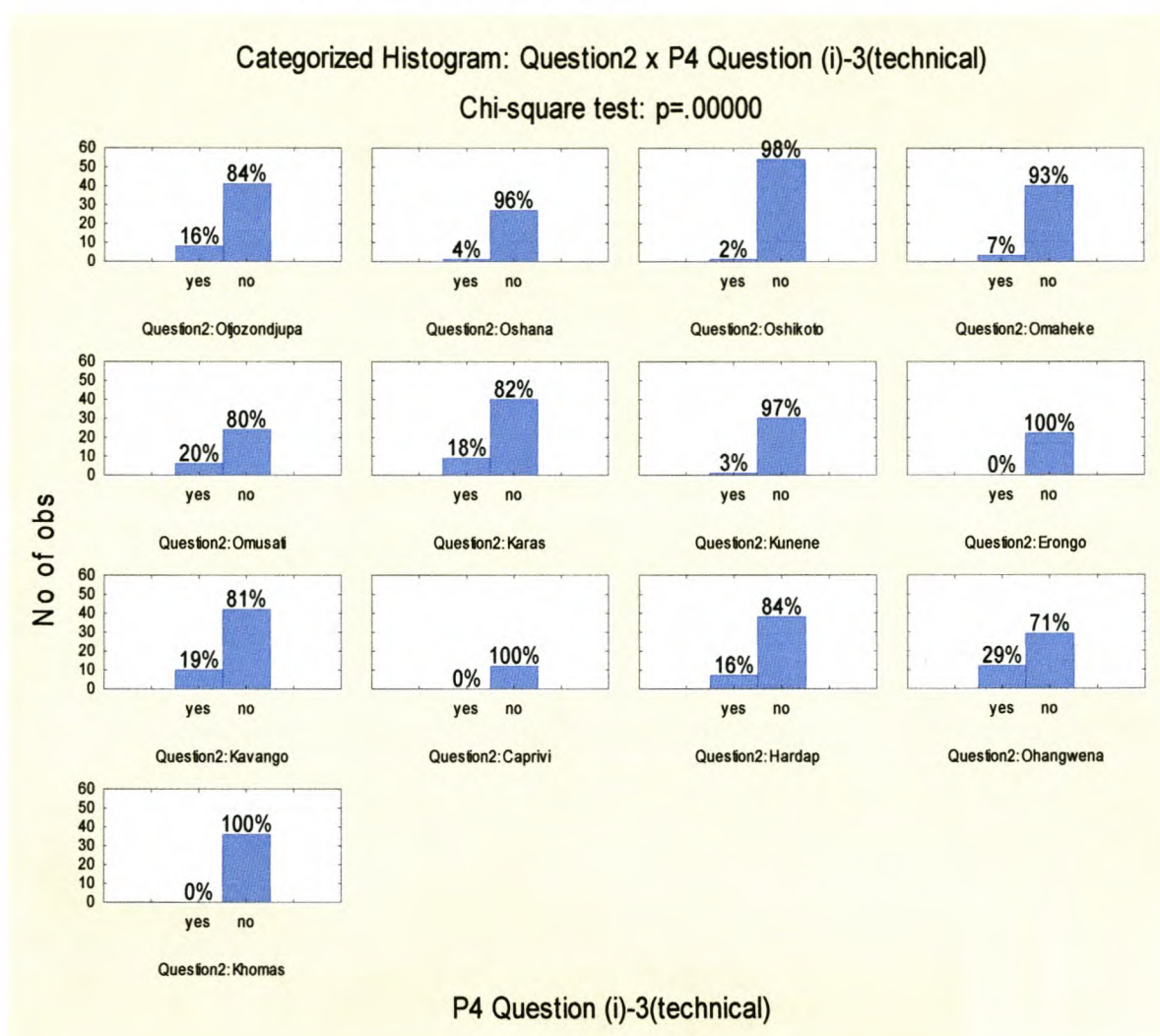


FIGURE 5.80 TECHNICAL SUPPORT PROVIDED TO ECD CENTRES BY MBESC ACCORDING TO REGION



According to figure 5.81 a significant number of the respondents from all regions in Namibia revealed that they received no technical support from parents and communities with only 29% of the respondents from the Ohangwena region who indicated that they received technical support from parents and communities.

FIGURE 5.81 TECHNICAL SUPPORT PROVIDED TO ECD CENTRES BY PARENTS AND COMMUNITIES



5.8.6 Material Support

Figures 5.82 and 5.83 revealed that a significantly large number of early childhood education centres in Namibia benefit from some sort of material support from the Ministry of Women Affairs and Child Welfare while hardly no material support is received from the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture. While, for example, 90% of the respondents from the Kavango region indicated that they received material support from the Ministry of Women Affairs

and Child Welfare, 90% of the same respondents indicated that they received no material support from the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture. This certainly indicates that ECD in Namibia benefits more from the support of the Ministry responsible for the Welfare of children than from Education.

FIGURE 5.82 MATERIAL SUPPORT PROVIDED TO ECD CENTRES BY MWACW REGION

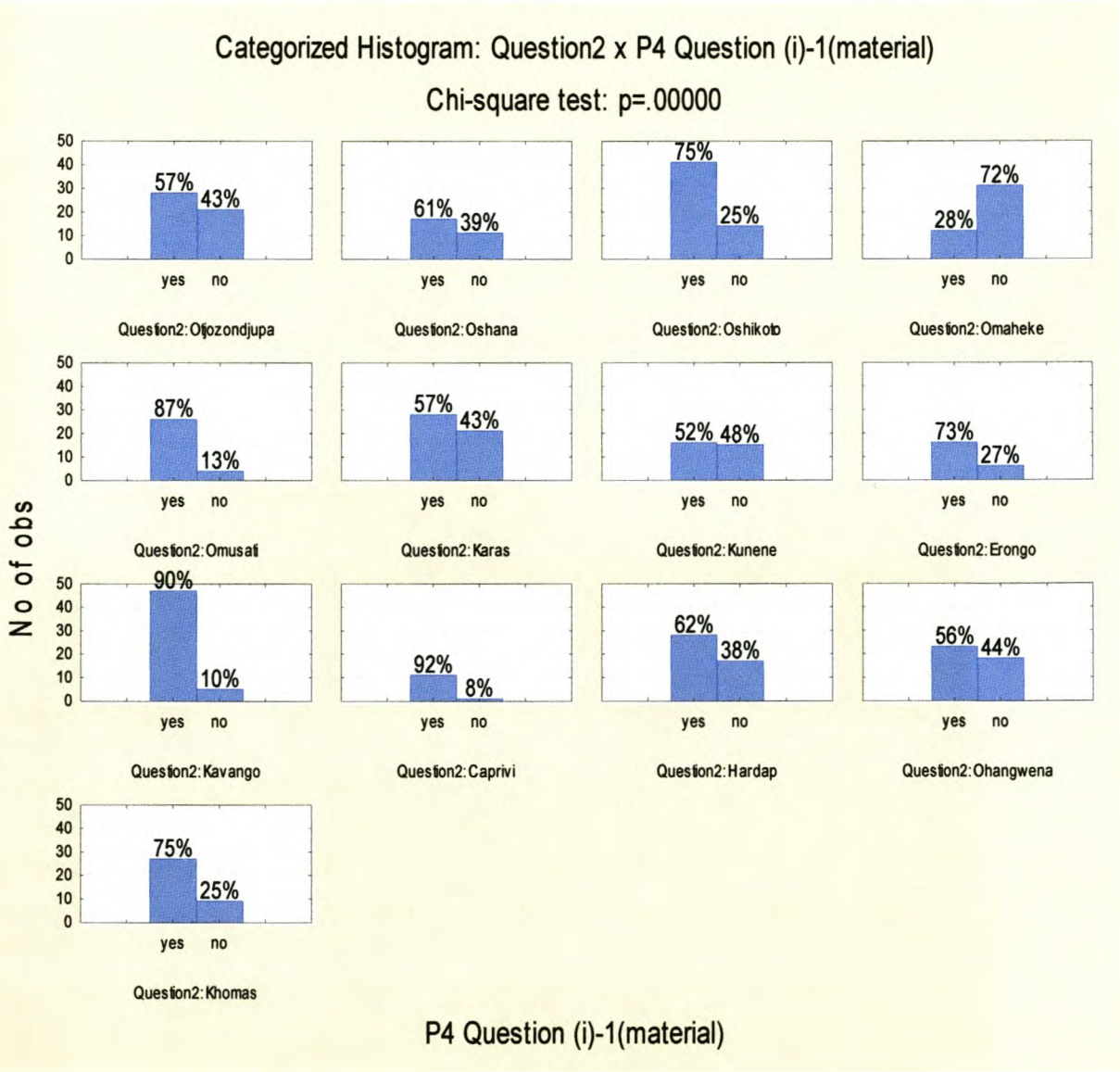
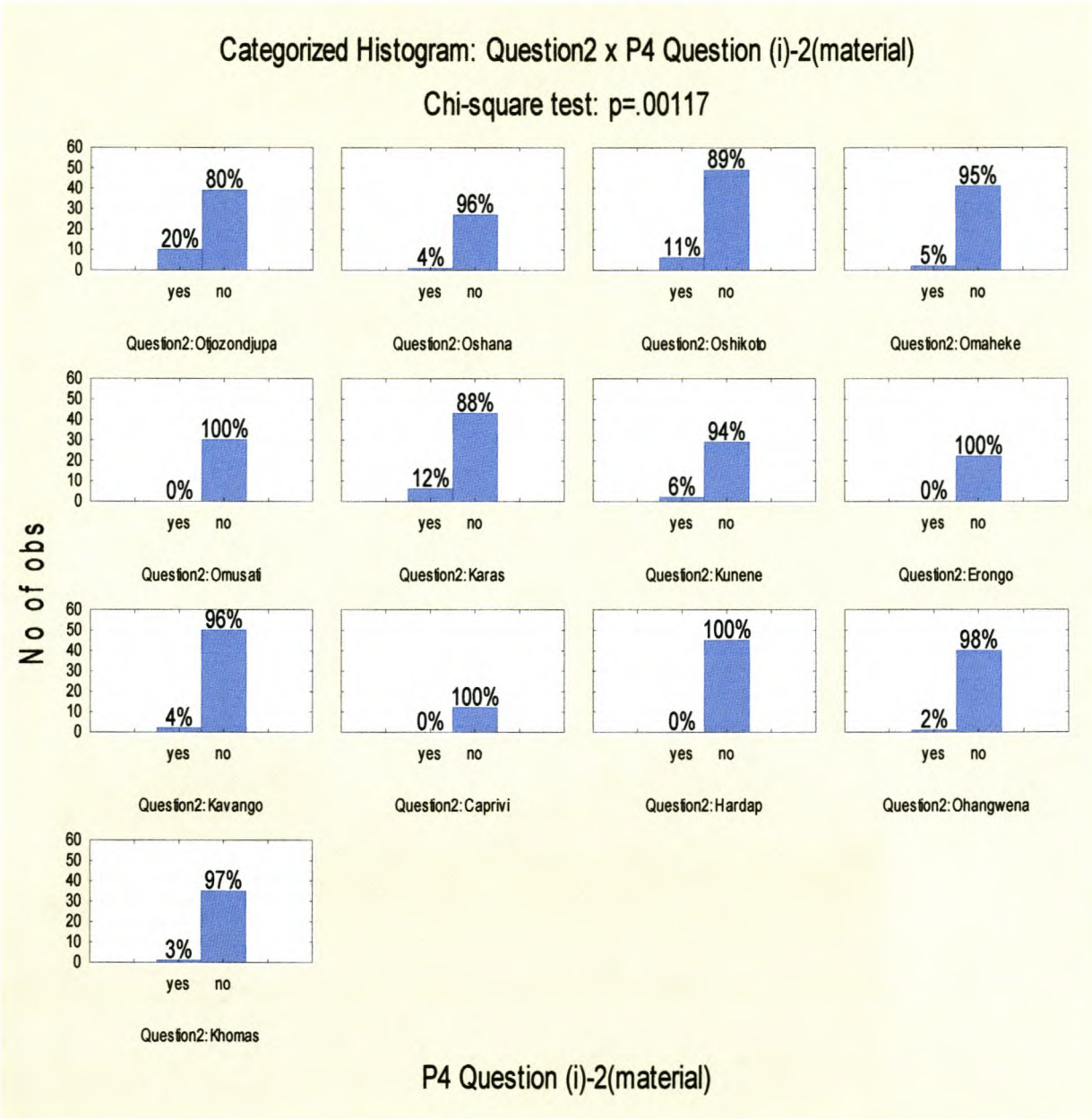
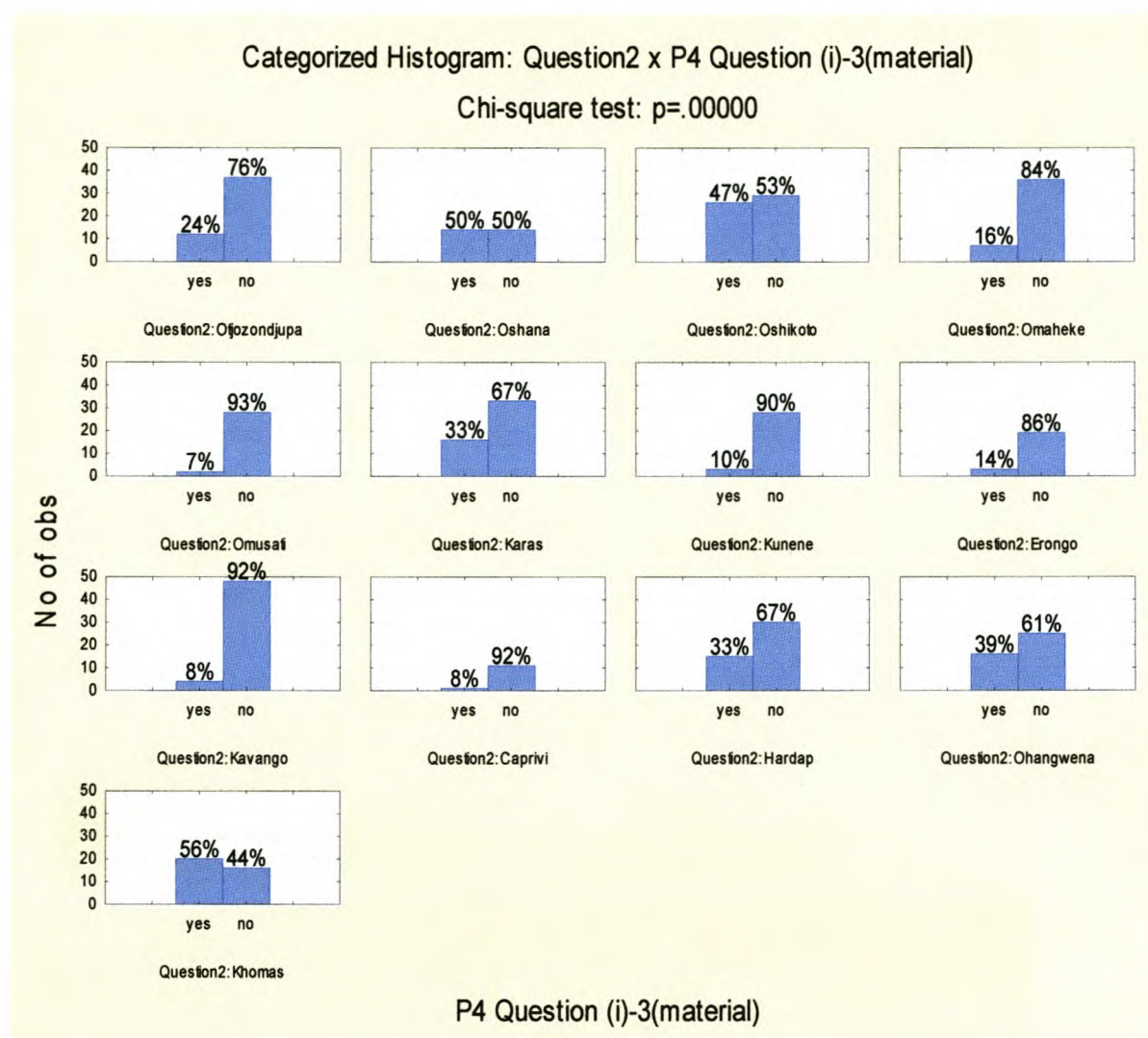


FIGURE 5.83 MATERIAL SUPPORT PROVIDED TO ECD CENTRES BY MBESC REGION



Although not in all regions, parents and communities somehow provided material support for early childhood education centres in some regions in Namibia. For example, according to Figure 5.84, 56% and 50% of the respondents from the Khomas and Oshana regions, respectively, revealed that they received material support from the parents and communities.

FIGURE 5.84 MATERIAL SUPPORT PROVIDED TO ECD CENTRES BY PARENTS AND COMMUNITY



Only some regions in Namibia seem to benefit from receiving material support for early childhood education from the private sector. Figure 5.85 indicated that only 56% of the respondents from the Khomas region and 30% of respondents from the Omaheke region revealed that they received material support from the private sector. This represents only 13% of the total number of female respondents and 18% of the male respondents who revealed that their centres received material support from the private sector (see Figure 5.85).

FIGURE 5.85 MATERIAL SUPPORT PROVIDED TO ECD CENTRES BY PRIVATE SECTOR

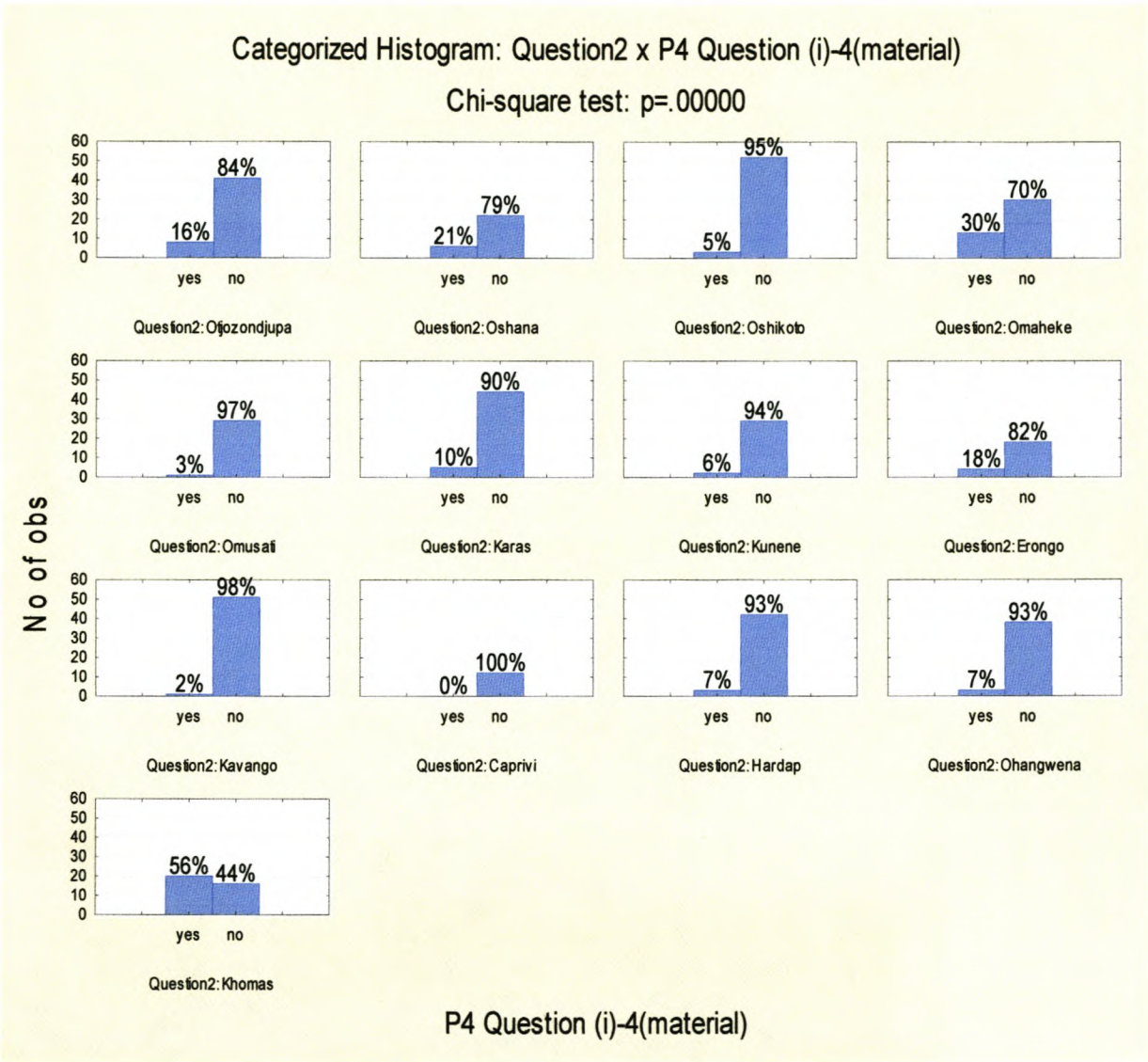
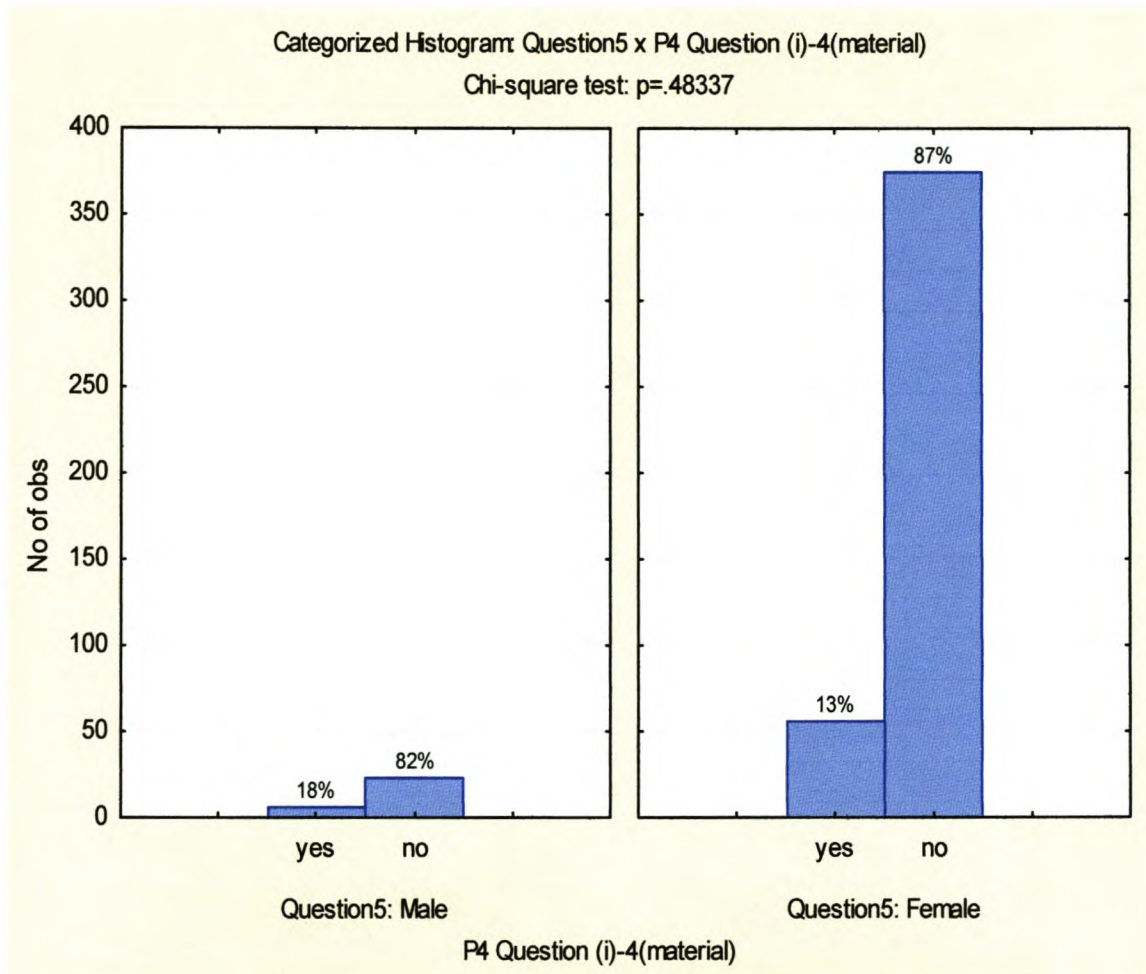


FIGURE 5.86 MATERIAL SUPPORT PROVIDED TO ECD CENTRES BY GENDER



5.9 QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE CONTENT OF ECD POLICY AT THE CENTRE

Three open-ended questions were asked in Part 4 on whether the centre had a specific policy that addresses the development of children, in order to obtain a better understanding of the early childhood educators' knowledge of the content of the policy. The data was analysed as per the three categories below:

- If yes, please explain the content of the policy.
- If no, please explain why you think that child development is not addressed at the centre through the implementation of the policy.

- c. Does the policy in place at the centre encourage child development and learning?

There were some variations with regard to the knowledge of early childhood educators and the content of the policy at ECD centres. Those respondents, who indicated that the policy addressed child development, revealed that it addresses the safety and health of the child, while some indicated that it addresses the emotional and physical development of the child.

The majority of respondents who indicated that their policy did not address child development at the centre revealed that their centres did not have a specific policy which addressed the development of children. In addition, they highlighted lack of information and knowledge of the Policy as well as lack of training contributed to them not being aware of the specific policies at the centres.

Some of the respondents, who revealed that the policy encouraged child development and learning, indicated that it contributed to preparing children for cognitive development as well as preparing them for Grade 1 while others revealed that it also prepared the children to learn to play with one another.

5.10 SUMMARY

The Chapter provided an analysis of the quantitative data on the survey conducted amongst early childhood educators in all 13 educational regions in Namibia in order to obtain relevant data on the knowledge and perceptions of these educators with regard to inclusive education approaches in early childhood education in Namibia. The relationship between a number of variables (biographic, policy and curriculum) was also analysed in order to determine the extent of their knowledge of inclusive education.

From the data analysis it is very clear that many of the early childhood educators

in Namibia are not aware of the relevant policies and approaches towards an inclusive early childhood education. In addition, the majority are not qualified and experienced, which may have some negative impacts on implementing a quality inclusive approach to early childhood education in the country. The next chapter discusses the implications of the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

While the literature review has confirmed the benefits of children starting early with their education, through the provisions of early childhood education, the main objective of this study was to investigate current educational issues, policies, practices, trends and needs of learners faced with barriers to early childhood education in Namibia and, to provide guidelines for the development of *inclusive* education in early childhood education. This study was undertaken through a survey research to determine the provisions of inclusive early childhood education in Namibian ECD centres. It will clarify the challenges faced in the existing early childhood centres that prevent more children with special needs from attending and participating successfully and suggest guidelines for an inclusive early childhood education approach in Namibia.

The following questions, which constituted the basis of this study, were addressed in the study:

1. What are implications of inclusive education for early childhood education both internationally as well as in Namibia?
2. What is the current situation in Namibia regarding the functioning of early childhood education centres with specific reference to the perceptions and preferences of ECD educators in the overall process of educating children with special educational needs?
3. What guidelines could be provided to the ministry responsible for the welfare of children for the development of an inclusive approach in early

childhood education in Namibia?

This chapter discusses the main findings of the survey research undertaken amongst 493 early childhood educators in all 13 educational regions of Namibia and implications of the findings before any practical guidelines for an inclusive ECD in Namibia can be suggested.

6.2 DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

6.2.1 Early Childhood Education Centres

The data revealed some glaring disparities regarding to the provision of early childhood education in Namibia. While early childhood education centres exists in all the regions, many children in regions such as the Caprivi, Oshana and Oshikoto do not benefit from early childhood education services. The National Population and Housing Census (Namibia, 2003) and the World Bank (2004) obtained similar findings, indicating that early childhood education services still benef only a minority of children in Namibia.

6.2.1.1 Type of Centres

The findings revealed that the majority of early childhood education centres in Namibia are found in rural areas. A significant majority of these are community managed with a few run by churches and the private sector. By contrast with Sweden, France and New Zealand where early childhood education is run by the State, the government of Namibia does not run any ECD centres. The review of the literature has provided some evidence that the successful implementation of an inclusive early childhood education curriculum depends on the quality and policies in place and how these policies are implemented. For example, in New Zealand, South Africa and England (Department of Education, 2001; Haddad,

2002; Ministry of Education, 2002), an effective early childhood education system is a result of collaboration between the ministry responsible for education as well as that responsible for the welfare of children. New Zealand, also places an emphasis on the participation of the government in close collaboration with the communities in the provision of early childhood education. The implications for these findings are that the government of Namibia should take a proactive participatory role in the provision of inclusive early childhood education in Namibia. This would involve, not only through the development of the curriculum but also in the provision of both in-service and pre-service teacher education in early childhood education and other services such as possible facilities for early childhood education attached to primary schools. This would mean a better guarantee of equal opportunities in the provision of inclusive early childhood education services and the basic conditions that facilitate the proper management of early childhood in terms of human, financial and technical support.

6.2.1.2 Physical Facilities at the Centres

(a) Toilet facilities

Educational facilities and the general environment of the school are both very important factors in whether an early childhood education centre promotes or hinders inclusive education as well as the safety and health of young children. While the urban centres had clean and functional toilet facilities, a considerable number of early childhood education centres in rural areas do not have the benefit of such luxuries. Where toilets do exist in rural areas, they are pit toilets. In addition, the majority of these ECD centres are also not equipped with any hand washing liquid in their toilets to promote personal hygiene amongst children. Having functional toilets and clean water is one of the major preconditions for promoting effective health in early childhood education. The implication of these findings is that schools in rural areas continue to be faced

with the challenge of ensuring and promoting effective health approaches as an integral part of the curriculum. An inclusive early childhood education curriculum should enhance the health of the children by addressing health-related issues and increasing the children's knowledge about the relationship between health, personal hygiene and sanitation and their own health. The literature review (Evans *et al.*, 2000; Myers, 2000; UNESCO, 2002) highlights the need for early childhood education programmes to have a clear health component in which the child is introduced to a holistic aspect of health, including sanitation. In this case, the majority of early childhood education centres in rural areas in Namibia cannot adequately address the aspect of good sanitation without adequate toilet facilities. It is thus the responsibility of communities in collaboration with the relevant Ministries, such as that responsible for agriculture and water resources, to undertake projects that will bring water and adequate sanitation facilities to rural communities to overcome this problem.

In addition to water and sanitation, the review of the literature also confirmed the importance of regular immunization and monitoring of the health of children at the early childhood education centres. The regular monitoring of children's health at the early childhood education centres will also facilitate the identification of any possible barriers to education. It will also allow parents and teachers to effect early intervention.

(b) Furniture

Children learn effectively through interacting with their environment particularly in the case for younger children. The learning environments in which children find themselves are therefore crucial elements in effective learning and development. It is the responsibility of the early childhood educator to provide children with positive learning experiences so that children are motivated to interact constructively with their environment. The environment could be a classroom and the furniture in that classroom or an outside area with the variety of play facilities

found in the playground. Furniture both inside and outside the early childhood education centre should be carefully selected, especially where children with special educational needs are involved.

The findings revealed that the majority of ECD centres, especially in rural areas do not have comfortable furniture for children. One may conclude that children will not learn effectively if they are taught in conditions that are not conducive to learning. An effective inclusive approach to early childhood education calls for classrooms that have the equipment necessary for optimal learning. Obviously, without adequate financial resources for early childhood education in Namibia, communities face the challenge of having to provide all necessary educational facilities for it, including well-equipped classrooms. The review of the literature suggests that the environment in which learning takes place plays a crucial role in the child's progress through Vygotsky's zones of proximal development. Conclusions drawn from the review of the literature include the importance of providing adequate space both inside and outside the classroom for children to manipulate objects and to interact with the use of various media to enhance their communication, cognitive, social as well as physical skills. Equipment such as computers, toys, blocks, bricks, puzzles, reading materials, musical instruments should be available in the classroom so that all children can use them as and when required according to their individual learning needs (Edwards and Knights, 1994; Eloff, 2001; Hanline, 1999; Klein and Chen, 2001; Malone and Langone, 1999; Evans, Myers and Ilfeld, 2000).

(c) Space

An inclusive approach to early childhood education requires children to have a safe and secure place to play outside the classroom. This allows the children to explore the environment around them actively. Adequate space is even more important for children with special educational needs. The environment outside the classroom must equally motivate children with special educational needs to

participate in any activity without the fear of accidents and injuries. It must also provide other opportunities for active learning alongside their peers and thus, according to Vygostky (1978) promote a community of learning amongst the children. The data show that most of the early childhood education centres have adequate play environments for children to play allowing children to move around freely. However, although the ECD centres have adequate space for children to play, access for children with disabilities has not been considered. The review of the literature has revealed that limiting children's opportunities to play may be a barrier to developmental maturation. It further revealed the importance of play in contributing to the holistic development of the child. Implications of these findings are that an inclusive early childhood education curriculum should be developed with clear guidelines on how play should be made an integral part of such a curriculum. Teachers in inclusive classrooms will thus be expected to utilise space both in and outside the classroom for play activities which could be child or teacher initiated in order to develop the analytical and critical thinking skills of children.

(d) *Ramps for Children with Physical Disabilities*

The majority of ECD centres in all of the 13 educational regions in Namibia are not equipped with ramps for children with physical disabilities thus representing a barrier to ECD education for such children. Adaptations of physical environment both inside and outside the classroom in order to provide access to children with special educational needs are essential. Accessibility of facilities must be a special consideration when it comes to children with special needs. Both classroom and outdoor space should not create more barriers to children with special educational needs but rather promote active participation and learning. The literature reviewed referred to a number of intentional and unintentional barriers to inclusive education (Pivik, McComas and Laflame, 2002; Kochhar, West and Taymans, 2000). The implications of these findings are that the construction of early childhood education centres should allow equal access and

participation of children with physical disabilities. Early childhood educators should have the skills to modify their classroom settings so that education can equally benefit those children experiencing barriers as a result of their physical disabilities. Ramps for children with physical disabilities should also be designed to accommodate teachers with the same disabilities as well as parents and community members.

6.2.2 Early Childhood Educators

The findings clearly revealed that early childhood education in Namibia is primarily a profession for women. The majority of men who are in early childhood education centres act as Heads of the Centres or Deputies. However, there is a saying that “*if you educate a man, you educate an individual but if you education a woman, you educate a nation*”. It becomes obvious that if women are provided with the relevant training and skills, they will be able to make a significant contribution to quality early childhood education. Implications are that more women interested in ECD as a career should be empowered with all the relevant skills in order to become professionals in that field and to become promoters of lifelong learning, not only amongst children but also amongst adult in their communities. However, this does not mean that men should not take an active role in ECD provisions. Their active participation, also as fathers should be fully encouraged. The findings are consistent with the review of the literature that in many countries, women as opposed to men provide early childhood education. The same is indicated by UNESCO and ILO (2003:Viii) when they report that:

In general women outnumber men at the lower levels of education (early childhood and lower primary school levels), which are usually associated with lower levels of remuneration.

The implication of these findings is that inclusive early childhood education policies should empower women to facilitate the holistic development of children. This will involve changing their beliefs, attitudes and practices so that they adopt

an inclusive approach to early childhood education. They should also be encouraged to take in-service teacher education programmes in order to improve their qualifications and compete for higher remunerations to make early childhood education a profession like any other reputable profession.

6.2.2.1 Qualifications

The data revealed that a significant number of early childhood educators in Namibia have less than a grade 12 qualification with no training or experience in special needs. Very few have training in inclusive education. A majority of respondents from the Kavango, Otjozondjupa, Omusati, and Oshana regions do not have the appropriate qualifications to teach children with special needs in ECD centres. Educators with more than 15 years of teaching experience revealed that they had the right qualifications to teach children with different needs in ECD centres compared to the younger educators who had no qualifications. Implications for these are that early childhood education is not given the same attention and priority as basic formal education in Namibia. The literature review shows that inclusion is a complex issue; full inclusion will be a far-fetched dream if teachers are not well prepared to teach in inclusive settings. Inadequate teacher qualifications and experience may hinder effective early childhood education. Namibia can learn from the Swedish example of insisting on university qualifications for early childhood educators. However, quality ECD in Namibia will remain elusive, unless efforts are made to put in place legislation and mechanism to guarantee the provision of qualifications and training for ECD educators and to ensure that the colleges of education need to provide compulsory modules on special needs and inclusive education approaches. The Ministry responsible for education should institutionalise the teaching of early childhood education and consider the provision of training courses at both the colleges of education and the University of Namibia, which are specifically aimed at the certification of early childhood education teachers. Such courses could be linked to the Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD) currently offered for

primary school teachers in Namibia. The training courses to be offered should be fully related to the philosophy of inclusion and should not consider special needs as a separate component of teacher education.

It is also important for the ministries responsible for education and child welfare to coordinate the in-service education of those unqualified early childhood education teachers. Such in-service training can be provided at the regional or cluster level by experienced inclusive education consultants (Engelbrecht, 2001; 2004). UNESCO has produced a *Teacher Education Resource Pack: Special Needs in the Classroom*, which can be adapted for in-service teacher education in the various regions in the country. The literature review confirms that teacher development does not only contribute to the development of the individual teacher but also to the development of the whole school community.

The review of the literature clearly outlines the importance of an inclusive approach to early childhood education in Namibia if the country is to attain all the development goals and objectives outlined in NDP II, EFA and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015, and in the Vision 2030.

6.2.2.2 Teaching Experience

The finding revealed that in addition to inadequate qualifications amongst early childhood educators, the majority of these ECD educators also lack the relevant teaching experience. The majority or 54% of the respondents, have between 1 and 5 years of teaching experience, followed by 28% who have between 6 and 10 years of teaching experience. An inclusive education approach in early childhood education will be hard to achieve if no improvements are made with regard to the quality of teaching for ECD educators and no appropriate professional courses are offered at any of the institutions of higher education. It is expected that legislation will call for the training and retraining of ECD educators so that they are empowered in all areas of ECD. The National

Qualifications Framework should establish criteria for accreditation for ECD educators so that the standards and quality of ECD can be improved. There will also be a need for Policy revision in order to ensure that the teaching aspect of early childhood educators is fully catered for. This should make it possible to provide educators of sufficient quality and competence, both in formal as well as in special needs in early childhood education. Thus ECD centres will be able to provide quality education, quality care and appropriate security for children while they are away from their parents.

The findings are in consistent with the review of the literature that being trained in mainstream education does not necessarily guarantee that the teacher will have the necessarily skills and expertise to teach in special education settings. A trained teacher with sufficient experience should be in a position to learn from the children in the same way that children learn from him or her and adapt his or her teaching approaches to meet the needs of individual children. Nevertheless, knowledge about early childhood education and development and special needs in education is necessary in order to enable the teacher to communicate effectively with all children in the classroom and to enhance their development and learning. Data on lack of training and experience in early childhood education seem to confirm the fact that many early childhood educators are teaching only for the sake of having a job and looking after children rather than contributing to the quality of education in ECD and preparing children for formal education.

6.2.3 Number of Children in Class

Interestingly, the findings revealed that the majority of early childhood education centres have a teacher-pupil ratio of 1:15. These findings suggest that teacher-learner ratios in early childhood education are adequate to promote child learning in all developmental areas mentioned in Chapters 2 and 3 above. However, while there are enough teachers to provide each child with an adequate amount of

time, the quality of education is still an issue. Rather than spending resources on recruiting new teachers they should be used to train the ones already available in order to improve on the quality of ECD.

The findings on the teacher-pupil ratio are consistent with the literature review that an inclusive early childhood classroom should have fewer children in order to provide the teacher with the opportunity and flexibility to provide individual attention to children. The learner teacher-ratio should also be linked to the teacher's qualifications and experience. Where possible, the services of consultant teachers or experts in special needs education should be called upon to work closely with the teacher in the inclusive classroom so that they work with the fewer children who may require the teacher's constant attention.

6.2.4 Barriers Encountered at ECD Centres

The review of the literature identified a number of barriers to inclusive education in general and early childhood education in particular. There are several categories of internal and external barriers. Internal barriers are those related to the biological, medical and health history of the child. They may result in the child experiencing developmental and educational delays. External barriers are those related to the child's experiences at home and within the community due to socio-economic and cultural factors. Parental abuse and other forms of violence, poverty, low parental education and illiteracy within the family as well as curriculum inflexibility, and teachers' attitudes towards diversity may result in the child's inability to be motivated to learn at school. Physical structures, for example the lack of ramps or narrow doorways for children in wheelchairs may also be a barrier for children with physical disabilities as they may lack access to classrooms, libraries, and laboratories and thus create a barrier to learning. These barriers are also termed environmental barriers. Some barriers to learning are caused by negative attitudes and stereotyping of children with special needs in education. These are called *intentional attitudinal barriers*, and may be in the

form of name-calling, emotional bullying or being ignored. Barriers were caused by the lack of knowledge and information about special needs and inclusive education are called unintentional attitudinal barriers. Despite these barriers to education and participation, which were indicated in the literature review, children at risk of facing these barriers can be supported when proper policies are in place and well implemented, early childhood education centres and communities are fully inclusive and adequate early intervention is provided.

In addition to adequate resources the health and well-being of children in ECD centres play a critical role in their ability to develop. Amongst the common problems faced by children in ECD Centres are poverty, neglect, emotional behaviours, learning difficulties, physical illness, poor vision, lack of hearing or limited speech, HIV and AIDS, physical attacks and withdrawal. The Caprivi, Karas, Kavango and Omaheke educational regions seemed to be most affected with regard to children experiencing problems at ECD Centres in Namibia. The situation seems to be the same as in South Africa where children do not participate in early childhood education due to the prevalence of poverty and HIV and AIDS.

ECD educators in Namibia without proper qualifications in inclusive education approaches are thus faced with the serious challenge of addressing special needs in early childhood education. In Chapter 6.2.2.2 above, it was indicated that the majority of early childhood educators do not possess adequate teaching experience either. As discussed in Chapter 3, a teacher with no training or experience in inclusive education is unlikely to have the necessary skills to identify barriers to education and learning. Teachers with more years of teaching experience more often revealed that they had children in their classrooms who live in poverty compared to those with fewer years of teaching experience. This could mean that experienced teachers are better able to identify the different challenges children are faced with compared to their younger counterparts. This suggests the importance of ECD educators without any relevant experience being trained in all aspects of special needs in education. Research has shown

that lack of experience in teaching, and in particular in special needs in education may be a barrier to an inclusive approach to education (Wilson, 1998; Scruggs and Mastropieri, 1994; McCollum and Maude, 1994). Teachers working with children, especially those with special educational needs require special skills and knowledge in order to be able to cope in inclusive settings and to cater for the individual needs of each child. In light of the impact of HIV and AIDS, poverty, child abuse and many other social factors affecting the development of the education system, there is a need for an inclusive education curriculum that acknowledges and respects differences in learners as well as that learning takes place at home, the community and within the broader formal and non-formal education contexts (Muthukrishna, 2001). This obviously calls for new and future ECD educators to be prepared to meet the demands of inclusive settings. With the impact of HIV and AIDS in Namibia, and on orphans and other vulnerable children, early childhood education centres will have to provide psychosocial support to children affected and infected by HIV and AIDS.

The results indicated that poverty is affecting a significant number of children who are supposed to benefit from early childhood education in Namibia, especially in the Kavango, Karas, Otjozondjupa and Ohangwena regions. Implications are that those children who are already marginalized due to their social backgrounds will be left out of the education system. Only those that can afford it will continue to benefit from access to education. In order to eliminate socio-economic barriers to ECD, mechanisms should be put in place to enable children living in poverty to benefit from ECD services in Namibia. Such mechanisms could include the provision of a feeding programme at ECD centres so that the children who come to the centres hungry receive food. Drawing on the examples of countries such as Sweden and the United States, policies should be put in place so that public funding makes it possible for the most disadvantaged communities benefit from a quality inclusive early childhood education. It is also very important for the government to consider making early childhood education compulsory in the longer term, at least, to children between the ages of 3 and 6 years old. Parents should be obliged to take their children to early childhood

education centres. Local and community fund-raising for early childhood education should also be encouraged, with parents being involved in organising fund-raising events for ECD centres.

6.2.5 Early Childhood Education Curriculum in Place at the Centre

The content and quality of any programme is determined by a number of factors, including the curriculum in place and the quality of teaching. A successful inclusive early childhood education approach will depend on the appropriateness of the curriculum and its response to the needs of the individual child in the classroom. As discussed in chapter 2 above, curriculum is everything that influences a child's learning, be it formally or informally. It embraces the values, beliefs and attitudes of teachers, administrators, children and the whole school community and can therefore be regarded as relationship between teaching and learning and the outcomes of that learning. Since curriculum is a policy issue, it was important to establish the knowledge of ECD educators about the current National ECD Policy in place, before discussing the curriculum in place at ECD centres in Namibia. Research confirms the importance of an inclusive curriculum in early childhood education (Bredenkamp, 1987; Edwards and Knight, 1994; Hurst and Joseph, 1997; Klein and Chen, 2001; Malone, 1998).

6.2.5.1 National ECD Policy

As indicated in Chapter 3 above, the National ECD Policy provides a broad framework for early childhood education in Namibia. It addresses issues of programme development, coordination of relevant stakeholders, policy implementation, resources as well as monitoring and evaluation of specific programmes. It clearly identifies the role of all stakeholders; government, private sector, communities and parents in the provisions of early childhood education in Namibia.

Although the implementation of the National ECD Policy is a very important aspect of ECD in Namibia, the findings revealed that a majority of ECD educators, especially in rural areas were not aware of the National ECD Policy. This is an indication that information does not easily reach rural areas compared to urban areas, which may again contribute to evident disparities and inequalities in education provisions between rural and urban areas.

Research suggests the importance of developing national policies that take into account the needs of children experiencing barriers to education as well as the needs of societies in the provision of inclusive education (Bredenkamp, 1987, Haddad, 2002; Lubeck, 2001; Scruggs and Mastropieri, 1994). It further stresses the importance of policy development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation that should operate at all levels of the society involving teachers, parents and communities. Obviously, the findings that teachers were not aware of the national ECD policy have some negative implications about the process of implementation of the National ECD Policy and thus on the quality of service provisions in ECD in Namibia. It could mean that the ECD educators were neither involved nor consulted during the process of developing the National ECD Policy and may not have been sensitised to the importance of such a Policy. In order to ensure ownership of the Policy and sustainability of ECD programmes, policy development should be a '*bottom-up approach*' (Evans, Myers and Illfeld, 2000) in which early childhood educators as well as parents, communities and NGOs are actively involved in the development process. In Chapter 3 it was suggested that the development of an inclusive education would be possible if there were clear policies and legal frameworks that define the rights and responsibilities of all stakeholders involved in the education of children as well as clear guidelines on resource allocation. Only through the active participation of educators and parents will policies adequately reflect the special needs in early childhood education. Parents and educators who spend most of their times with children, either at home or in the ECD centre, will be able to decide whether such policies are realistic as well as relevant and to provide important information concerning the special educational needs of children to be addressed in such policies. The

development of an inclusive early childhood education policy should not therefore be only the responsibility of the ministry responsible for Child Welfare but should closely involve the ministry responsible for education and training. It is also essential that it involves the active participation of communities and non-governmental organizations as well as parents associations.

Disparities were also observed with regard to knowledge about specific policies at the ECD centres on the development of children. While educators in some regions indicated their knowledge of specific policies at the ECD centres on the development of children, ECD educators in other regions were not aware of the existence of such policies, nor were they aware of policies addressing the special needs of children in early childhood education. This is particularly true of respondents from the Hardap, Oshana and Omusati regions. There were more younger ECD educators than older ECD educators who were not aware of the policies who also revealed the same ignorance, compared to their older counterparts. These younger educators also made up the majority of those with a Grade 12 qualification or less who were not aware that specific policies addressing the developmental needs of ECD children in their centres existed. The findings revealed that ECD educators do not necessarily have a thorough understanding of the various policies. This could have an impact on the services they are providing for children in their care. One wonders whether a lack of interest in their work or a lack of a reading culture amongst younger educators as well as educators from rural areas is what affects their knowledge of what is happening at ECD centres around the country. If early childhood educators are expected to be the implementers of policies affecting the development of children, it is crucial for policy makers to ensure their active participation in the conceptualisation and development of relevant policies affecting children in early childhood education.

6.2.5.2 The ECD Curriculum

Although many ECD educators were neither aware of the National ECD Policy nor of any specific policy addressing the needs of children with special needs in education, the majority of them were, at least, aware of the existence of a curriculum in place at their ECD centres, though not necessarily about the content. In addition, it also appears from the findings that there is no specific national curriculum for ECD Centres. The existing curriculum is for the training of ECD educators in Namibia. As a result, each centre or region implements its own curriculum without regard to any possible national policies or guidelines. However, if there is no national curriculum from which specific regional curricula could be drawn up, the provisions of early childhood education in Namibia will remain disjointed and uncoordinated. If no national curriculum is developed, from which centres can design their regional curricula, centres with adequate facilities and resources are likely to continue to implement quality programmes while other centres, especially those in poor rural areas, are likely to implement poor quality programmes.

Educators were aware that such a curriculum made provisions for a safe environment for children at the ECD centres. However, according to the findings, fewer educators from rural regions compared to those from urban areas were aware of the existence of such a curriculum.

It appears from the findings that ECD educators are, sensitised, at least, to the importance of a special needs education curriculum in early childhood education. According to the literature review (see 3.3.6.2 above) an inclusive approach to early childhood education is possible if educators are well trained and sensitised to the importance of an inclusive ECD curriculum. In Namibia, the majority of ECD educators, irrespective of age, qualification, region, rural or urban, felt that children in early childhood education centres could be taught in the same classroom settings, regardless of their abilities. What needs to be reinforced, however, through in-service and pre-service education for rural educators is their

full involvement and interest in what is happening in their ECD centres, including the implementation of an inclusive curriculum, which includes the entire range of what children experience at the ECD centre. Although the early childhood educators indicated that the curriculum makes provisions for children with special needs, they seem not to have grasped the concept of *special needs in education*. Because, when they were asked whether it caters for the needs of hearing impaired children, their answers contradicted what they had said earlier when they said that the curriculum does not make provisions for such children. Therefore, emphasis on research on inclusive education should be placed on teachers to implement a curriculum that takes into consideration all the different barriers to education and learning. In cases where teachers may face the challenge of implementing such a curriculum, the curriculum should make provision for services of paraprofessionals, consultants or team teachers and other experts such as mental health specialists, speech therapists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists (Engelbrecht, 2001; 2004) and sign language experts who should be called upon to facilitate the implementation of an inclusive curriculum. Namibia may have to invest in training these professionals who are in need in the country.

The findings indicate that there are regional variations with regard to the curricula provisions for children who are hearing impaired. While some regions revealed that their curriculum did not make provisions for children with hearing impairments, others did. For example, a majority of the ECD educators in the Khomas and Karas regions revealed that the curriculum did not make provisions for children with hearing impairments, 83% and 81%, respectively. On the other hand, a majority of ECD educators in Oshikoto (85%) and Caprivi (75%) knew that the curriculum made provision for hearing impaired children. In addition, over 60% of the ECD educators with a teaching experience between one and five years revealed their ignorance of curriculum provisions in early childhood education for children who are hearing impaired.

While the majority of ECD educators from Caprivi and Oshikoto regions were

aware that the curriculum made provision for children with physical disabilities, educators in some regions such as the Karas and Khomas were ignorant of such provisions in the ECD curriculum. The ECD educators who were younger knew that the curriculum made provisions for children with physical disabilities while their older counterparts did not know.

The findings were also contradictory with regard to curriculum provisions for children with physical disabilities. While educators in some regions revealed that their curriculum made provisions for children with physical disabilities, some regions indicated the opposite. For example, 63% of the respondents from the Khomas region revealed that the curriculum did not make such provisions compared to 82% of ECD educators from the Ohangwena region that indicated that the curriculum provided for the needs of children with physical disabilities.

The implications of these findings are that there is no national standard ECD curriculum in place in Namibia. Each Centre and region implements its own curricula. Equally, due to lack of training and expertise in ECD, educators may not fully understand the concept of inclusive and special needs education and are equally not aware of the curriculum in place in their respective ECD centres.

The lack of knowledge of the ECD educators about an inclusive ECD curriculum and the provisions for children who are hearing impaired in ECD centres suggests that ECD educators may not have the necessary and relevant skills to be able to identify children with special needs at that very young age. This will result in the lack of capacity to recommend and provide early intervention strategies in order to prevent future problems in formal basic education. Teachers with limited skills and knowledge about the curriculum in place may not be in a position to provide the necessary guidance and the support children need, especially those experiencing barriers to learning, and to implement a developmentally appropriate inclusive approach in early childhood education. This implies that the Ministry responsible for education should develop one national inclusive ECD curriculum that could be adapted according to the needs

of the different regions and centres.

As evidenced in Chapter 3, the successful implementation of an inclusive ECD curriculum depends, in addition to the teaching approaches adopted in the classroom and the experience and qualifications of the educator, on well-trained educators in special needs education with an understanding of the importance of a developmentally appropriate approach to early childhood education. It is clear that since ECD educators in Namibia do not have this kind of training, there is a need to prepare them through pre-service and in-service teacher education in all aspects of special needs education.

The literature review in the same chapter also revealed that inclusive education may only be successful if the curriculum takes into consideration the individual characteristics of children as well as their developmental needs. The educator's attitudes towards children with or without disabilities are also crucial factors in implementing an inclusive curriculum (Bredenkamp, Knuth, Kunesh and Shulman, 1992; Lazarus, Daniels and Engelbrecht, 1999; Lomofsky, Roberts and Mvambi, 1999; Zimba, Mostert, Hengari, Haihambo-Mwetudhana, Mowes and Mwoombola, 2002). This means that ECD educators need to be sensitised to all aspects of an inclusive ECD curriculum so that they address the diverse needs of all children, irrespective of their abilities and disabilities. The implications for these findings are clear that ECD educators should be fully involved in curriculum development. Equally, an inclusive curriculum calls for closer communications between children and the educators as well as between educators and the child's parents. Once educators are fully involved in curriculum development, they will be in a better position to understand what is happening inside as well as outside the classroom situation and respond effectively to the demands of children in an inclusive context. Parents will be able to provide educators with information about their children not necessarily known by the educators in order to facilitate the child's learning at home as well as school. The South African School Act of 1996 places emphasis on the important role of parents in developing school policies and governing schools in order to ensure an inclusive approach to

education. The Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture of Namibia has the Education Act 16 of 2001 in which the role of the school boards, consisting of teachers and parents are well articulated. This means that the active participatory role of parents and communities should also be extended to include their partnerships in curriculum development, implementation and monitoring at the level of ECD. Through his concept of the zone for proximal development, Vygotsky (1978) has called for the reform of curriculum in early childhood education so that teachers provide the children with the necessary support for learning and development and teaching children how to learn *to live together* in this diverse world. The curriculum should not only place emphasis on the cognitive aspects of child development but also on the affective domain of learning so that children develop positive attitudes and respect for the self and others. The findings are coherent with the literature review that schools reflect the diversity of society and communities and should therefore follow an ecosystemics approach to respond to the diverse needs of children in their care.

6.2.6 Teaching Methodology and Special Needs Education

An inclusive teaching approach promotes an individualised approach to teaching and learning where children are given the opportunity to learn at their pace of development. Such a curriculum equally promotes interactive learning through for example, play and group work. A positive revelation from ECD educators in Namibia is that they adapt their teaching methods to suit the individual needs of learners. Also, some teachers revealed their preference to teaching children who require special needs separately, indicating that ECD educators employ some flexibility in their teaching. More teachers from the Omusati region (60%) did not prefer to teach their children with special needs individually. This may imply that their special needs were not taken into consideration or that teachers were not quite sure as to how to deal with the special needs of the children.

In light of Piaget and Vygotsky's views of learning and development, it is clear

that early childhood educators are required to adapt their teaching methodologies in order to provide an individualised education for the young child which is in line with their zone of proximal development (Eloff, 2001; Green, 2001; Hurst and Joseph, 1998). The early childhood educator will be expected to adopt a variety of teaching methods in which the child is introduced to a variety of interesting and challenging educational activities which are at the child's learning potential through the use of computers, and other information technologies such as radio and television, games, puzzles, toys in the classroom. Such learning should also be able to develop the child's scientific concepts, language and communication skills for the child to develop his or her advanced cognitive skills.

6.2.6.1 Teachers Attitudes Towards Children with Disabilities in ECD Centre

There are some negative perceptions amongst some Namibian ECD educators about addressing special needs in ECD centres. While some educators prefer to teach all children in the same settings, others prefer to teach children with disabilities in different settings. Whereas the majority of ECD educators indicated that they had a positive attitude towards accommodating children with disabilities in ECD centres in Namibia, in the Khomas and Erongo regions a significant number of ECD educators, 21% and 15%, respectively, were not in favour of children with disabilities attending ECD centres. ECD educators from rural regions were more positive about teaching children with special needs in the same settings as compared to educators from urban areas.

Similar responses were made when ECD educators were requested to indicate whether possible stereotypes would influence their teaching methods. A larger number of educators revealed that they did not cope well with teaching children with disabilities in ECD centres in Namibia. This is particularly the case with regard to Otjozondjupa, Omaheke, Erongo and the Karas regions where quite a significant number of educators revealed that they did not cope well. With regard

to the age of the ECD educators, 35% of the age group between 18 and 25 years and 31% of the age group between 56 and 60 years indicated their lack of ability to cope with children with special needs in ECD. This implies that there are still many teachers in all age groups who are not well experienced to deal with special needs in ECD centres. This finding is consistent with the results obtained by Scruggs and Mastropieri (1994) that once introduced to the concept of inclusion and inclusive education, teachers are generally supportive of the idea of inclusion. However, such acceptance is only theoretical because at the practical level, they start showing resistance if the child's disability is severe. The literature review in Chapter 3 refers to the beliefs and attitudes of teachers which could have a positive or negative impact on the outcomes of an inclusive education curriculum (Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden, 2000; Forlin, 1995; Scrugg and Mastropieri, 1994, 2000, Zimba *et al.*, 2002).

The results revealed that many ECD educators in Namibia prefer to teach in the child's mother tongue. This could be because children in the centres are normally from the same language backgrounds where teachers find it easy to use the child's first language or because some teachers are themselves not fluent in English and prefer to teach in their first language. Another conclusion is that the National Language Policy is being implemented at the level of the early childhood education in Namibia. However, one can also assume that if children are taught in the local languages, ECD in Namibia will continue to be provided along racial lines where integration of children from all language groups may be a challenge. It is obviously important to promote the child's first language in early childhood education but it is equally important to have children from various language backgrounds in the same education settings in order to promote multiculturalism.

ECD educators who have not been won over to the inclusive approach to education may not provide appropriate access to children with disabilities. If teachers are not aware of the diverse needs of children with disabilities, these children will not get the particular attention they need. Appropriate teacher training is necessary to ensure that ECD educators are well prepared to cope in

inclusive settings. They need to be flexible in their teaching and to provide all children with healthy environments for learning.

6.2.7 Parent Participation

Children do not live in isolation but make up part of the larger communities and societies in which we live. A community has been described, as that of a child's own family, both immediate and extended, local community which consists of neighbours, and the global community. The child's needs need to be addressed within each level of community. The findings revealed that some parents rarely meet with the ECD educators in order to discuss issues related to the development of their children. This is particularly the case in the Kavango, Omusati and Otjozondjupa regions. A possible implication for lack of parental involvement in early childhood education is a breakdown of communication between home and school.

If parents do not meet with the ECD educators, they may not be able to provide the ECD educators with crucial information concerning the child's development, especially in light of children experiencing barriers to learning. Equally, teachers may also not be able to share their concerns about the challenges facing children with special education needs. The ecosystemic approach considers home and school as components of the wider community, which may impact on the changes or challenges experienced by one component of that system (Engelbrecht, 1999; Lazarus, Daniels and Engelbrecht, 1999; Wilson, 1998). If information concerning the child with disabilities is not shared with the early childhood educator, the ECD educator may be faced with challenges in the classroom which may impact on the whole classroom and school. Collaborative teaming between the child's home, school, school physiologists, speech/language therapists, pathologists and medical personnel (Wilson, 1998) makes a crucial contribution to putting in place early intervention strategies, especially for children with special needs in education. ECD Centres should put

in place mechanisms to discuss any issues that may affect the development of the child, not only with the parents but also with other providers of special needs education such as teachers of children with hearing, visual and speech impairments, medical practitioners and educational psychologists. The literature review indicated that in New Zealand and Sweden, for example, early childhood education centres promote collaborative partnerships with parents, and communities in order to improve services. It was also suggested in the literature review in Chapter 3 that parents are valuable sources of information about their children and are in a better position to provide information about their children's disabilities (Swart, Engelbrecht, Eloff, Pettipher and Oswald, 2004). The implication of this finding is that early childhood education centres should start to involve parents and communities actively in their programmes, including curriculum development and monitoring. Once parents are involved in inclusive early childhood education, they will be better motivated to send their children experiencing barriers to education to early childhood education centres. At the same time, they will also be better placed to press for inclusive early childhood education in society. This approach calls for a systems theory in which the child is viewed as the product of the system of units that interact - the *microsystem*, the *mesosystem*, the *exosystem* and the *macrosystem*. Equally the child's behaviour in a systems theory is regarded as the product of multiple rather than a single cause where one part of the system is affected, it could have an impact on the whole system. Should a child experience some barriers, his or her barriers would be considered, not only from within the child, but also taking into consideration the environment in which the child lives. This means that parents and communities must be fully involved in the education of their children.

6.2.8 Source of Support

6.2.8.1 Government

Early childhood education in Namibia benefits more from communities and

parental support than from any other sector in the country, but does not generally benefit financially from the Government. Few respondents in the Erongo, Kavango, Karas, Omaheke and Otjozondjupa, Hardap, regions indicated that they received financial support from either the MWACW or from the MBESC.

The results further revealed that there are some variations with regard to technical support from the two Ministries responsible for education and child welfare. While some regions seemed to benefit more from these services, others indicated a lack of technical support from the Ministry of Women Affairs and Child Welfare as well as from Basic Education. All the respondents (100%) from the Caprivi and Erongo regions indicated that they received no technical support from the MWACW and MBESC, with the exception of 9% from the Erongo region who revealed that they received some technical support from the MBESC. The Kavango region had an equal number of respondents who revealed that they received some technical assistance from the two Ministries. In the Khomas region, over 90% of the respondents revealed that they received no technical assistance from the two Ministries. This implies that the ECD educators in the different regions in Namibia are not fully informed about the nature of assistance available from the government and may thus not be approaching government institutions for support.

Naturally, the Ministry of Basic Education Sport and Culture, which should be responsible for curriculum development and in-service education of ECD educators, could be expected to play a crucial role in providing technical assistance through in-service or pre-service teacher education. The findings referred to in the previous paragraph may suggest that the ECD is not a priority of the ministry responsible for education hence the lack of support for that sector of education. If the relevant Ministry is not providing such services, and they remain the responsibility of communities and churches, the quality of ECD is unlikely to improve. Those educators that have not received any formal qualification will not improve their skills in order to adopt an integrated approach to a developmentally appropriate inclusive education in ECD in Namibia and will

continue to provide low quality services in that sector. The EFA goals call for free and equal access to education for all children, including early childhood education. However, with only limited financial support for ECD in the country, free access to ECD education for Namibia and the attainment of EFA Goal 1 will remain elusive.

With regard to material support, the findings revealed that far more ECD centres receive some sort of material support from the MWACW than the few which receive material support from the MBESC.

The impact of ECD on a child's future development and on education in general cannot be overemphasized. It was indicated earlier in Chapter 2 that ECD helps to reduce imbalances in education. In addition, an investment in ECD is a contribution to sustainable and human development. The government, especially the Ministries responsible for education and child welfare, should make ECD a priority and take a more active role to ensure that ECD, especially at the level of policy implementation, the curriculum and training of teachers is the responsibility of Government. NGOs cannot sustain ECD if they have to cover the financial costs of the ECD centre, including maintenance and salaries of educators. The government should take the responsibility for subsidizing the salaries of ECD educators to guarantee sustainability and quality of service provision, while parents continue to play their role of contributing to the development of ECD through, for example, devoting their time to provide any technical assistance as and when required and through donations which could be financial or materials to enhance the quality of teaching and learning.

Government support becomes even more crucial in ECD at a time when Namibia is faced with the impact of HIV and AIDS on communities. Many children have lost their parents due to HIV and AIDS and have become orphans and other vulnerable children. These children also have the right to quality early childhood education. In cases where the guardians of these children can afford to send them to ECD centres, the government should be able to assist so that these

children also benefit from the same services extended to those whose parents can afford it.

6.2.8.2 Parental and Community Support

The findings revealed that more Namibian parents and communities provide financial support to ECD compared to the government, with the exception of the Ohangwena region which had more than 60% of the respondents who indicated that they did not receive financial support from parents and the communities. The reason for fewer parents in the Ohangwena region contributing to ECD could be the high levels of poverty in that region. The 2001 Population Census revealed that the Ohangwena region is one of the most disadvantaged regions in the country with high levels of poverty.

Although the majority of parents and communities provide financial support for ECD, this is not true with regard to technical support. An overwhelming majority of the ECD centres in all educational regions receive very little or hardly any technical support from parents and communities. The findings indicate that all respondents (100%) from the Khomas, Caprivi and Erongo regions receive no technical support from parents and communities, with more than 90% of respondents from the Oshana, Kunene, Omaheke and Oshikoto indicating that they receive no technical support from parents and communities. The data also reveal that the majority of the ECD centres do not receive any material support from parents and communities, with the exception of the Oshana regions where 50% of the respondents indicated that they receive such support and 50% the contrary.

The conclusion from these findings is that although parents and communities provide some financial support to ECD centres in Namibia, their actual involvement in early childhood education is rather limited and calls for attention. Another logical conclusion is that although parents value the education of their

younger children highly, they do not have the necessary understanding and appreciation of the importance of being fully involved in the intellectual and social development of their children, especially those with special needs in education. Consequently they leave that responsibility to the educators. The implication for an inclusive approach to ECD is that parents can no longer be viewed as passive onlookers, who are incompetent and inexperienced about the education of their children. Instead they should be regarded as having an equal role to play in the education of their children and should be empowered with the necessary skills to take on that active role and make informed decisions about the future of their children, especially those with special needs in education. Working closely with parents and communities in ECD is a very important aspect of early intervention. Parents are well-placed to advise ECD educators about the educational challenges their children are faced with. Having the relevant information about the child's development will make it possible for the educator to provide the necessary support and guidance to both the child and the parents. This type of support service, yet true of ECD centres in Namibia, should be encouraged. This will benefit not only individual children with special needs but also to the family and community, who may in turn be better placed to advise the ECD educators about their children's developmental needs. Some parents may be facing some barriers to participation due to their socio-cultural backgrounds. Early childhood education centres should pay particular attention to such parents in order to bring them closer to the education of their children.

6.2.8.3 The Private Sector

The private sector plays a significant role in contributing towards the development of education in Namibia. However, the role of the private sector in contributing to ECD in Namibia is not well defined. The findings revealed that the private sector in Namibia do not necessarily provide any financial support to ECD. The Caprivi and Kavango regions did not receive any financial contributions for their ECD centres from the private sector. This was also true for

the overwhelming majority of respondents from the rest of the educational regions. A possible conclusion is that the private sector is not clear about the importance of early childhood education and does not regard contributions to ECD as a priority. Another could also be that communities in rural areas live far from the business community. This is in itself a barrier for them to approach the private sector for possible support. The exception was the Khomas region where 56% of the respondents indicated that they received some material support from the private sector.

Financing of education is not only the responsibility of the government or the parents and communities but should be the collective responsibility of all stakeholders including the private sector. According to Evans, Myers and Ilfeld (2000) the private sector is one of the new partners in early childhood education and has been establishing early childhood education programmes in Namibia to benefit their employees. In Namibia, a Children's Trust Fund has been established to which government, the private sector and development partners can contribute (Evans *et al.*, 2000). It is hoped that such a Trust Fund is operationalised so that all children in Namibia equally benefit from quality education services. Another way in which the private sector can contribute to early childhood education is through providing material support to the needy early childhood education centres, the provision of scholarships to pre-service teachers or by contributing towards the creation of income generating projects at ECD centres, especially in the remote rural areas.

6.2.8.4 Churches

In the past, churches played a very significant role in the provision of ECD in Namibia. However, the situation seems to have changed drastically. One reason for lack of financial support to ECD could be that donor communities no longer extend their financial support to churches. The overwhelming majority of ECD educators from all educational regions with the exception of the Karas region

(37%) revealed that they received no financial assistance from churches for their ECD centres. Churches have a role of social responsibility to their communities, which they should meet, especially amongst communities in remote rural areas.

6.3 SUMMARY

This Chapter discussed the findings of the survey research undertaken amongst ECD educators in all education regions of Namibia. The findings revealed that Namibia does not have legislation concerning the provision of teacher education for ECD educators in place. Consequently, there are a number of ECD educators who are unqualified and inexperienced in special needs and inclusive education approaches to early childhood education. Legislation should thus be enacted to ensure appropriate training of ECD educators in all aspects of child development and special needs in education.

The findings also showed that a significant number of ECD educators in Namibia were not aware of the National ECD Policy in place. This identifies the need for the relevant Ministries to ensure wider dissemination and advocacy on the implementation of the Policy through workshops, mass media and in-service training programmes in the different regions. The challenge for the Ministries responsible for education and child welfare is to re-examine their policies and philosophies in education in order to remove any barriers to meet the needs of *all* children in early childhood education and thus make education for all children a reality by 2015. However, in the review of the literature, the issue of policy development and effective implementation were clearly emphasised as critical aspects in ensuring effective inclusive education. In South Africa and New Zealand, for example, it was clear that new policies and legislation had to be put in place if the education system was to respond to the diverse needs of all the learners in the country. Concerning the development of inclusive policies, policy development should become a 'bottom up' rather than a 'top down' approach. This could ensure the participation of teachers, parents and community members

so that they can be more committed and take ownership in its implementation.

It was also revealed from the findings that although ECD educators seem to embrace an inclusive approach to ECD in Namibia, the majority of these educators neither seemed to have a clear understanding about the concept of special needs and inclusive education nor were some of them aware of the nature of the curriculum in place at their centres. While some educators revealed that they had no problems with teaching children with different needs in their classrooms, the same teachers indicated that they found it difficult to teach children with special needs in the same classroom settings as the rest of the children. There is therefore a need to ensure adequate training and retraining of ECD educators in order to empower them with the relevant knowledge and skills to understand the underlying concepts of an inclusive approach to ECD. Policies supporting inclusive early childhood education are important in order to ensure that all children are treated equally and that they benefit from the same educational provisions, irrespective of their backgrounds. As identified in the literature review, one cannot expect under-qualified and inexperienced teachers to teach effectively in inclusive education settings. In a systems approach to inclusive education, teacher professional development is crucial: teachers should be provided with the necessary skills in order to provide support services to learners facing barriers in education.

Parental and community support in the provision of inclusive ECD has also been stressed. The role of parents and communities should not be ignored in policy conceptualisation, implementation and monitoring as well as in curriculum development. The literature review referred to the important role of parents as equal partners in the education of their children.

The next Chapter provides some guidelines for an effective inclusive education approach in early childhood education.

Barriers to education such as organizational, environmental and attitudinal

barriers were discussed in the literature review and their impact on inclusive education. The findings revealed a lack of adequate classroom furniture in many of the ECD centres, especially those in rural areas. Comfortable furniture is important in an inclusive setting. Ideally each ECD centres should be well equipped with such furniture to promote learning especially amongst children with special needs. However, it should also be realised that not all schools will be able to provide their learners with such comfort, at least not in the immediate future. Inclusive education does not happen overnight. It is a long term process that has to be embedded in the education system of a given country. With the reform of the education systems and the curriculum in place, the long-term goal of any Ministry responsible for education should be to ensure adequate facilities that take cognisance of the needs of children experiencing barriers to education and participation. As emphasised in the literature review, schools and classrooms should have the necessary facilities to ensure full access and participation of children and adults with special needs in education. It should, however, also be noted that inclusion is not necessarily only about well-equipped classrooms with expensive equipment, but more about changing attitudes and communities that recognise difference and support each other in promoting learning. Efforts should be made, in situations where resources are a challenge, to provide alternative means of education and facilities for children with special needs in inclusive settings.

These findings call for the re-examination and re-organisation of the early childhood education system in order to introduce a holistic systems approach to early childhood education in Namibia within the framework of an ecosystemic approach to inclusive education. Although children should be considered as individuals with specific identities, it is impossible to divorce their learning competencies from the societies and contexts in which they live.

CHAPTER 7**SUGGESTED GUIDELINES FOR AN EFFECTIVE
INCLUSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION****7.1 INTRODUCTION**

This Chapter provides guidelines for an effective implementation of an inclusive early childhood education in Namibia based on an ecosystemic approach. An ecosystemic approach to education was defined in Chapter 2. It calls for schools to go beyond the narrow concept of special needs education and to adopt a holistic systemic approach to education in which inclusion is seen as been influenced by factors both in and outside the classroom. It relates to the dynamic interactions at different levels between the child and the society around that child, where each level either influences or is influenced by others within the whole system. Therefore, the ecosystemic approach calls for a multi-coordinated approach to early childhood education. Chapter 6 confirmed that barriers to learning and participation can and do exist within families and societies, cultural values, national education policies, the wider education sector, and schools systems. One can therefore not address the issue of special needs and inclusive education without addressing the overall development of the broader education system, including the socio-economic, political and cultural aspects of societies in which children grow.

The guidelines in this Chapter follow from the research findings described in the literature review in Chapters 2 and 3 and in Chapter 6 of this research study. The guidelines proposed here are not meant to replace the *Guidelines for Establishing Early Childhood Development Centres in Namibia* (1998) but to

introduce a policy framework for the implementation of inclusive early childhood education in Namibia, with particular emphasis on, but not restricted to, 3 to 6 year-olds before their formal education. Research has documented the positive impact of inclusive early childhood education programmes, especially those that have focused on the ecosystemic approach to education. The guidelines provided in this Chapter stress the wider participation of all stakeholders in early childhood education in order to promote a quality education for all children.

Inclusion, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 3, embraces a rights approach to education. The guidelines for an inclusive approach to ECD are developed within the ecosystemic approach to inclusive early childhood education in Namibia. It is expected that these guidelines will assist policy and decision makers in the Ministries responsible for education and child welfare, teacher educators as well as those working with children including parents and communities, to prepare them for a successful transition from early childhood and pre-primary education to formal basic education and for lifelong learning. The guidelines are expected to provide information on requirements for policy implementation of early childhood education and clarify the link between curriculum development and the implementation of an inclusive approach to ECD. Further strategies are also provided on how to involve educators, parents and communities when working with children with special needs in education. They are provided taking into consideration the fact that children may experience barriers to learning due to a number of factors as indicated in Chapter 1 and quoted below that:

learners with special educational needs include those learners affected by war and environmental degradation and change, learners who are victims of abuse and violence, street children, children being brought up outside of their own families, children in abusive forms of child labour, learners with disabilities, girls in situations where their education is regarded to be less important than that of boys, learners affected by HIV [and] AIDS or other chronic illness, nomadic learners, learners from oppressed groups

subjected to racism or other forms of discrimination,[...] learners whose home language is different from the language of instruction (Donald, 1993; Botha, 1994; UNESCO, 1994; Booth, 2000; Dyson, 2001).

A child will not be motivated to learn if he or she does not feel ready for the school or if the school itself is not ready for the child. Children will show school readiness when they receive more support and attention to enhance their cognitive, social and emotional development. This may be effected through a number of interactions between the child and the environment in which the child is recognised as an individual and belonging to a group. This environment could be the teachers in the ECD centres, parents at home, siblings or peers in the classroom or playground, interactions with the wider society and the manner in which the curriculum is being implemented.

Each guideline will be developed alongside some indicators, which should be regularly monitored in order to analyse how well services are being implemented and how well children are doing as they progress towards their formal education.

7.2 IMPLEMENTATION OF GUIDELINES FOR AN INCLUSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAMME

7.2.1 Introduction

Early intervention, particularly through early childhood education, provides the necessary services to enable children who experience or are at risk of experiencing barriers in learning and participation, to realise their full potential. No single agency will be capable of meeting the needs of all children in an inclusive early childhood education context. Multisectoral collaboration is essential. The purpose of these guidelines is to provide guidance to the Ministries responsible for the welfare of children and education to enable them to

effect high-quality inclusive early childhood education throughout Namibia in which the rights of all children are valued. These guidelines are informed by the findings of the survey research conducted in this study.

7.2.2 Policy and Vision Statement: Philosophy of Inclusion

Inclusive education guidelines should include a clear policy statement on the importance of providing and integrated inclusive early childhood in Namibia. Such a policy statement should make it clear that the child is an individual with needs that should be respected and met. The policy statement should also provide clear reference to the Convention of the Rights of the Child and the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action, in particular Articles: 53 of the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action which states that

...the success of the inclusive school depends considerably on early identification, assessment and stimulation of the very young child with special educational needs. Early childhood care and educational programmes for children aged up to 6 years ought to be developed and/or reoriented to promote physical, intellectual and social development and school readiness (UNESCO, 1994:33).

In addition, such a policy should not be developed in isolation from other national development strategies and plans of action and must recognise and reflect the diversity of children with respect to race, culture, religious, language, health, socio-economic and political backgrounds. It should equally state the links between school and home and the importance of collaborative partnerships between parents and early childhood educators.

It is important that the Ministries responsible for education, child welfare and health put in place coordination strategies in which responsibilities of the different sectors are clearly spelled out with regard to early childhood education. Furthermore, although not a legally binding document, an inclusive ECD policy

should also explicitly state the responsibilities of the different stakeholders as well as financial resources possibly required to contribute towards implementing such a policy. Although the initiative and development of an inclusive ECD policy should be the responsibility of the Ministry responsible for the welfare of children, wider advocacy should be extended to parents and communities as well as educators so that they are actively involved at the level of conceptualisation. This would help to sensitise communities at the grassroots to the importance of education in general and an inclusive approach to early childhood education in particular, so they can take ownership of programmes and thus facilitate the implementation of the policy.

7.2.2.1 Indicators

- (i) The concepts of inclusive early childhood education are consistent with national education development strategies as well as with developmentally appropriate approaches.
- (ii) The ECD Policy and Vision Statement are widely disseminated and all stakeholders are sensitised towards its importance.
- (iii) The Policy defines the philosophy of inclusion and approaches to inclusive early childhood education.
- (iv) The policy provides guidelines for the organisation, management of early childhood education.

7.2.3 Basic Principle for Guidelines for an Inclusive Early Childhood Education Approach

An inclusive early childhood education approach should be guided by the following principles:

- (i) A developmentally appropriate inclusive approach should be adopted for all early childhood education centres in order to promote individualised

teaching to benefit all children with and without special needs in education.

- (ii) Early childhood education programmes should be of good quality regardless of the region or area in which they are being provided, sources of funding and curriculum in place.
- (iii) Diversity in early childhood education should be acknowledged, respected, and accepted, with support extended to those children who need it.
- (iv) All children should be allowed and given the opportunity to grow up as responsible citizens in society. The curriculum should thus place an emphasis not only on the cognitive aspects of development but also on the affective domains.
- (v) An inclusive early childhood education requires the development and maintenance of a collaborative partnership with the broader community, including other educators, parents, educational psychologists, nurses, speech and language therapist, development partners, should also be involved in decision making in early childhood education. The active involvement of fathers should also be emphasised.
- (vi) Children '*at-risk*' who may have potential special needs in education should be identified as early as possible so that they can receive the necessary services before they enter formal basic education.

7.2.3.1 Indicators

- (i) Children are developing in a holistic manner and their individual needs are recognised and early intervention for children with special needs provided.
- (ii) All critical stakeholders are actively involved in early childhood education programmes.
- (iii) The curriculum places an emphasis on developmentally appropriate approaches to teaching and learning.

7.2.4 Early Childhood Educators have the necessary Qualifications in Special Needs and Inclusive Education

The effective implementation of an inclusive early childhood education approach requires the services of experienced and qualified educators in inclusive education. It also requires that social workers, languages and speech therapists, physiotherapists provide professional support to these educators.

In addition, early childhood educators should participate in staff development programmes. Such programmes will help to keep them informed of current developments concerning early childhood and special needs in education, which could improve the quality of their services through better planning and implementation of programmes.

7.2.4.1 Indicators

- (i) An early childhood educator should have the love and motivation to work with all children, irrespective of their abilities, disabilities and backgrounds.
- (ii) An early childhood educator requires the skills and ability to work very closely with parents and community members from the diverse socio-cultural backgrounds of the children in their care.
- (iii) Early childhood educators should be constantly motivated to upgrade their teaching skills and qualifications through in-service or distance teacher education for professional development.
- (iv) An early childhood educator should be well qualified to identify barriers to children's participation in learning and taking actions to address such barriers.
- (v) Early childhood educators should be provided with opportunities to participate in national and international conferences and seminars on early childhood and inclusive education in order to improve their knowledge, theory and content.

- (vi) Early childhood educators should be motivated to do research on and produce articles on inclusive early childhood education.
- (vii) Early childhood educators should strive to improve their qualifications by obtaining a Certificate, Diploma, Bachelor's Degree or Masters Degree in specialised early childhood education. While the Certificate could be offered at the Colleges of Education or through NGOs, the Diploma and Degree courses should be offered by the Colleges as well as the University of Namibia, through distance or face-to-face modes of education. The Certificate course should be made compulsory, especially to all unqualified ECD educators. Some reform would need to be introduced in order to develop a B.Ed in ECD. All the courses should offer compulsory modules in special needs and inclusive education.

7.2.5 A Developmentally Appropriate Inclusive Early Childhood Education Curriculum

An inclusive curriculum with clear guidelines should be made available to all early childhood education centres in Namibia, which can be adapted to suit the different language and cultural contexts. Such a curriculum should provide comprehensible aims and objectives and set indicators to help assess how children are progressing in achieving those outcomes. It should further recognise that children's cognitive, emotional, social and language development cannot be separated and addressed in isolation but in an integrated and holistic manner, with an emphasis on the process of learning.

Equally, it is very important that the curriculum should be sufficiently flexible to make adjustment to children's individual needs possible, taking into account Vygostky's zone of proximal development. It should encourage educators to seek solutions that are appropriate for the developmental stage of each child.

The curriculum should consider the unique needs and characteristics of

individual children and should promote gender equality. In addition, it should convey respect for diversity in order to create healthy and caring attitudes amongst the children. Particular focus should be given to children with special needs in education.

It should also encourage children with special needs to interact freely with their peers without special needs through play, group work and games.

7.2.5.1 Indicators

- (i) The curriculum reflects the international frameworks and national policies on inclusive education.
- (ii) The curriculum has a clear philosophy and goals for inclusive early childhood education.
- (iii) The curriculum promotes the child's holistic development (cognitive, physical, social, linguistic and emotional) and recognises the individual needs of each child in the educational setting and promotes respect for diversity.
- (iv) The curriculum ensures that the child-teacher ratio supports quality and provides opportunities for each child to have constant interactions with the educator.
- (v) The curriculum encourages the child to take initiatives and to become independent.
- (vi) The curriculum provides opportunities for the teacher to balance the teaching where children can work individually, in smaller groups and in large groups considering the context in which the teaching is taking place.
- (vii) The curriculum promotes the development of scientific, language, mathematical and artistic concepts through the use of various teaching and learning aids in the classroom which may include computers, radio and television, magazines, toys, blocks, puzzles, reading, art and craft, music and dance.

- (viii) The curriculum provides the child with opportunities to develop understanding and emergent skills in reading, mathematics, literacy and music. Mathematical and scientific concepts and problems should be presented to the child in a meaningful way that is related to everyday life experiences.
- (ix) The curriculum considers the physical environment both in and outside of the classroom, taking into consideration children with physical disabilities, and how such an environment can contribute to child development considering the individual child's interest, abilities, cultural background and personalities.
- (x) The curriculum makes provisions for a bright classroom environment in which the learning areas are organised in such a way that children can freely move around without obstructing one another while engaged in activities.
- (xi) The curriculum provides challenging opportunities for the child's physical coordination and development.
- (xii) The curriculum considers reciprocal and positive teaching and learning encouraging a peer teaching approach.
- (xiii) The curriculum encourages the child to participate in decisions that affect them.
- (xiv) The curriculum promotes a comprehensive school health approach including hygiene, immunization, nutrition, water and sanitation, child safety and regular check-up by health officers.
- (xv) The curriculum promotes, where possible, the use of the child's mother tongue as a valuable tool for learning.
- (xvi) The curriculum promotes play as an integral part of development and provides challenging play experiences to encourage problem solving, reasoning, planning, predicting and creativity and curiosity as well as child initiated interactions to promote learning and development.
- (xvii) The curriculum encourages parents and communities to be involved in the education of their children and fosters good working relationship between educators, children, parents and the community.

7.2.6 Managing Early Childhood Education Centres

Based on the policies, legislation and curriculum in place, it is very important for each early childhood education centre to develop a comprehensive plan stating how the centre will be managed. Such a plan should recognise the involvement, for instance, of parents, communities, and professional such as speech therapists, psychologist, nurses and physiotherapist in order to increase participation and improve quality.

7.2.6.1 Indicators

Early childhood educators, communities and other experts involved in early childhood education contribute to developing management plans for the centres.

- (i) The early childhood education centres regularly disseminate information to parents about the children's progress at school as well as information on the different activities happening at the centres.
- (ii) Confidentiality is maintained at all times and information concerning individual children is not shared without the consent of the parents.
- (iii) The early childhood education centres hold regular meetings with parents and others involved in early childhood education and development to share the challenges facing the centres as well as to share experiences on best practices and what is actually happening at the centres.
- (iv) The early childhood education centres collaborate closely with the ministry responsible for education as well as with primary schools in order to facilitate a smooth transition to formal education for those children who have reached school-going age.
- (v) The early childhood education centres collaborate closely with the different health sectors during immunization campaigns and facilitate referrals as and when necessary.
- (vi) The early childhood education centres have clear information and keep a record of the child's history (hereditary illnesses, allergies, immunisation

history, and special needs).

- (vii) The early childhood education centres keep full reports about the child's learning and well being that are regularly discussed with the individual parents.
- (viii) The programmes implemented are monitored and evaluated regularly to improve the quality of the services provided.
- (ix) Information through books, publications, articles, videos is made available to early childhood educators to obtain new information and improve on the quality of education.
- (x) The early childhood education centres establish clear rules and regulations concerning their feeding and sleeping times at the centres during the day.
- (xi) There is a decentralised management statistical information to provide regular data on children and teachers in early childhood education.
- (xii) Continuous professional staff development must be encouraged and supported.

7.2.7 Promoting Health and Nutrition through Early Childhood Education

The health and safety of any child at the early childhood education centre should be considered amongst the most important factors contributing to child development and learning. Early intervention approaches are more effective if provided when the child is still young in order to avoid any future educational challenges. Each early childhood education centre should also facilitate regular health and safety inspections from the relevant ministries and institutions such as health, local government and housing and lands and resettlement. It should also play a role in ensuring access to preventative health care. Some children may be suffering from hunger and malnutrition due to poverty and other social conditions at home, which would have a deleterious effect on the child's development. Early childhood education centres have an important role to play in promoting a better

appreciation of the impact of nutrition on health.

7.2.7.1 Indicators

- (i) The early childhood education centres are able to provide early screening and identification of children who may be 'at risk' of facing barriers to education (sight, hearing, nutrition, immunisation, cognitive, allergies, dental, general health and other developmental screenings).
- (ii) The early childhood education centre is open for regular immunisation campaigns.
- (iii) Children are taught and encouraged to adapt to using simple rules of hygiene.
- (iv) The early childhood centres provide clean and safe drinking water to children.
- (v) The early childhood centres strive to provide, at least, one nutritious meal to children during the day taking into consideration health requirements of children and children with allergies. They use mealtimes to teach the children about the value of food.
- (vi) The early childhood education centres are kept clean and classrooms are bright and well ventilated. Where necessary, children's own drawings and pictures are hung on the walls in order to brighten the classroom.
- (vii) The early childhood centres provide clean toilets facilities to children. In case of pit latrines, such toilets are cleaned as often as possible and children are taught how to help to keep them clean. Soap is provided in all the toilets. Children are taught about the importance of washing hands, especially before and after eating and after using the toilet and are encouraged to do it so that it becomes part of their daily routine.
- (viii) The early childhood education centres keep records of children's health.
- (ix) The early childhood education centres have, at least, one First Aid Kit kept in a place that is easily accessible to all educators in the centres. Educators know what is in the Kit and are trained how to use the items in

the Kit.

- (x) The centres situated in a rural area, have small gardens to grow vegetables with the support of parents and the community.
- (xi) The early childhood education centres ensure that family education for parents includes a health component through providing such information during meetings with parents, through the radio and television and through letters and information brochures to parents and communities.

7.2.8 Safety is an Integral Component of the Early Childhood Education Programme

Parents should feel secure to leave their children at early childhood education centres and children should equally feel well protected by the educators in the absence of their parents. The safety of children therefore becomes a very important aspect of any early childhood education centre.

7.2.8.1 Indicators

- (i) The early childhood education centres are safe for children and so is the environment around the centres.
- (ii) The safety of children with physical disabilities is assured and new buildings are constructed taking into account the needs of children and adults with physical disabilities.
- (iii) The early childhood educators ensure that dangerous and poisonous objects are kept out of the reach of children at all times.
- (iv) All toys and other playing objects are neatly packed away after the children have been playing.
- (v) Early childhood educators refrain from labelling children or using derogatory statements.
- (vi) Unacceptable child behaviour is not ignored but dealt with in a

professional manner without the use of corporal punishment.

7.2.9 Early Childhood Education Centres Promote a Developmentally Appropriate Monitoring and Evaluation System

In order to assess the impact of the curriculum it is very important to establish monitoring procedures. The purpose of monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum and programmes is to make informed decisions about the effectiveness and quality of the programmes in place in order to provide necessary information about child development and learning. The evaluation used should be able to assist the early childhood educators to judge whether the teaching and learning environment and the curriculum in place are inclusive and provide the relevant opportunities for all children to learn. Evaluation of the programmes should lead to any necessary modification and adaptation of the curriculum and programmes in place in order to meet the needs of all children. Monitoring and evaluation should also be used on a regular basis to assess the work of individual children in addressing aspects of cognitive, physical, emotional and social development.

7.2.9.1 Indicators

- (i) The early childhood education centres build standardised monitoring and evaluation into their programmes.
- (ii) The early childhood education centres systematically monitor child growth and cognitive development and plan programmes according to individual children's needs.
- (iii) The early childhood education centres establish indicators to monitor the effectiveness of the curriculum and programmes implemented.
- (iv) The early childhood education centres constantly monitor interaction

amongst children, parents, educators and the community.

- (v) The early childhood education centres regularly monitor and evaluate the physical environment, health and safety of children in the centres.

7.2.10 Developing Partnerships with Parents and Communities

Parents are the first educators of children at home and schools reflect what is happening in the communities. The active participation of parents, communities, and the private sector as well as development partners in an inclusive education is therefore a very important contributing factor to the successful implementation of such an approach in early childhood education.

7.2.10.1 Indicators

- (i) Parents and communities feel assured that the early childhood education centre is a safe place for their children to be and where their children are accepted irrespective of their cognitive, physical, emotional and cultural differences.
- (ii) Parents and communities are made to feel that they can participate equally in the decision-making process in an inclusive early childhood education programme where their views and opinions are valued.
- (iii) Opinions of parents and communities are sought in the development of policies and curriculum for an inclusive education approach.
- (iv) The early childhood education centres provide opportunities for the sharing of information and ideas, especially amongst parents, early childhood educators, nurses, psychologists, special educators, speech therapists and communities.
- (v) Parents and communities are made to feel part of the early childhood education centres through establishing regular contacts and by organising meetings, producing regular newsletters, and training workshops for

parents on family literacy and through mass media campaigns such as radio announcements in order to enhance parental and community participation in early childhood education.

- (vi) The early childhood education centres provide assistance to parents with the early identification of children who may be at risk of experiencing barriers to education and learning with the view to providing early intervention.
- (vii) Parents and educators regularly communicate with formal basic education in order to prepare children for a smooth transition to formal education.
- (viii) Parents and communities participate equally in fund-raising activities for early childhood education.

7.2.11 GUIDELINES FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

This form should be completed by parents of children with identified special needs or those who are *at risk* of special needs and returned to the early childhood education centre.

1. Information about the child

Name and Surname of Child:	
Date of Birth:	
Place of Birth:	
Home Language:	
Physical Address:	
Postal Address:	
Telephone Number at Home:	

2. Information about parents

Mother's Name:			
Father's Name:			
Telephone Number Mother's	(Work)	(Home)	(Cell)
Telephone Number Father's	(Work)	(Home)	(Cell)
Date completed Year of admission:			
Form completed by:			
Signature:			

3. Needs Assessment

Please tick the correct answer with a **X** to provide information concerning the cognitive, emotional, social and language development of your child. Explain if necessary.

3.1 Health Related Needs

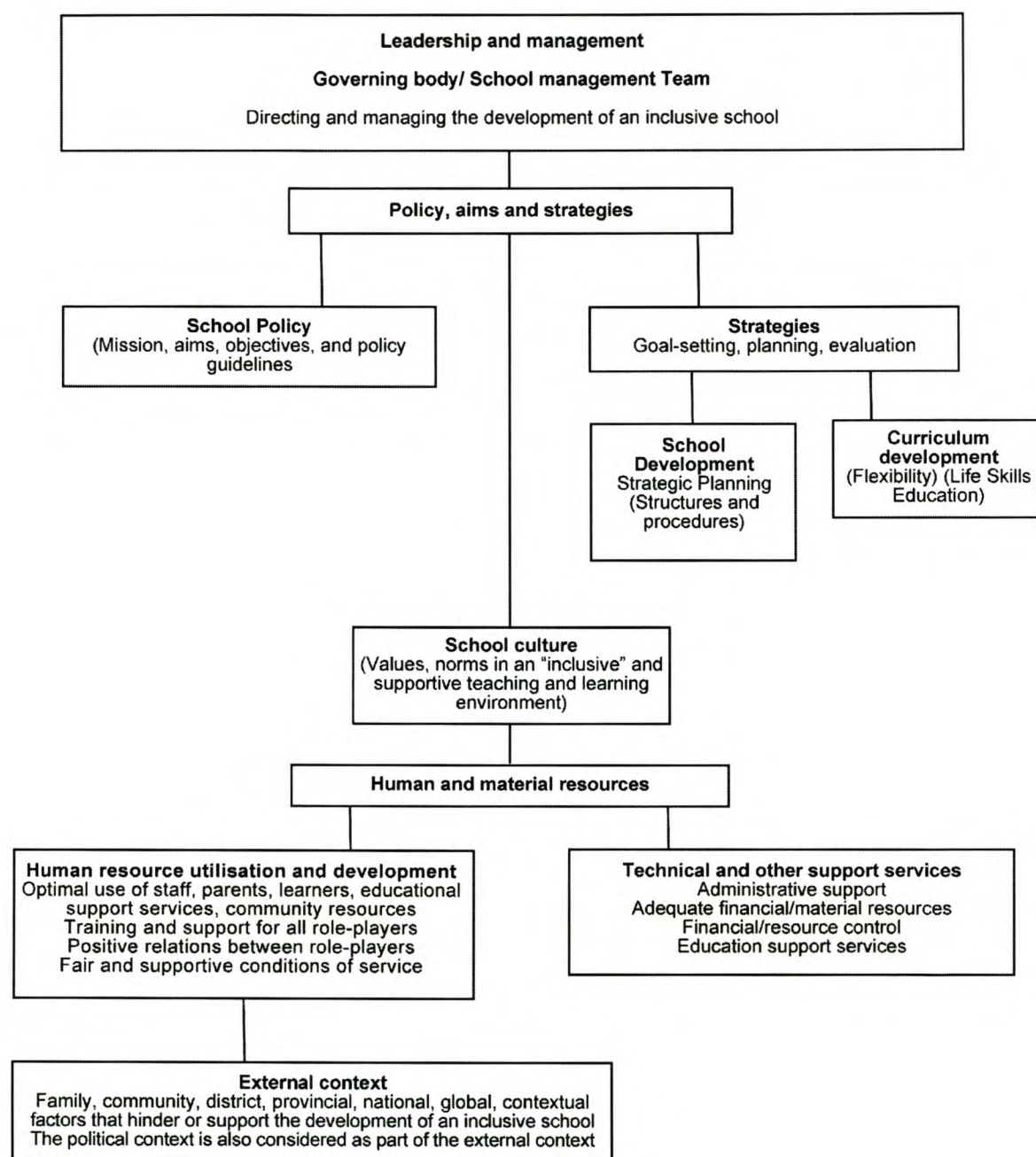
3.1.1 Hearing		
Normal	Yes	No
Hearing Impaired	Yes	No
Other (Please describe)		
3.1.2 Vision		
Normal	Yes	No
Requires glasses	Yes	No
Cannot see	Yes	No
Other (Please describe)		
3.1.3 Movement		
Child moves around independently	Yes	No
Child requires support to move around (stairs, toilet).	Yes	No
Child uses a wheelchair independently	Yes	No
Child requires full support	Yes	No
Child uses wheelchair and requires some support	Yes	No
Other (Please describe)		
3.1.4 Cognitive, Emotional and Psychological Skills		
Child is able to engage in activities with adequate concentration	Yes	No
Child requires constant guidance to engage in activities	Yes	No
Child experiences major difficulties to engage in activities	Yes	No
Child has a severe limited ability to focus on an activity	Yes	No
Child does not show any interest to engage in any activity	Yes	No
Other (Please describe)		

7.2.12 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided some guidelines to facilitate the implementation of an inclusive early childhood education approach in Namibia. It considered the importance of the various system levels within which every child develops starting with the environment closer to the child namely the parents and siblings and the wider local and national community and their influence on child development and learning.

The guidelines were produced within the framework of the ecosystemic approach to early childhood education and summarise the important elements of an inclusive early childhood education centre. Considering how schools mirror society, they should play an increasing role in breaking down the barriers to inclusive education.

Figure 7.1 provides an example of the implementation of an inclusive early childhood education within the ecosystemic approach to education.

FIGURE 7.1 ELEMENTS OF AN INCLUSIVE ECD SCHOOL

Adopted from Lazarus, Daniels & Engelbrecht (1999:63)

- ***At the national level***

The development and implementation of inclusive education **policies and strategies** aimed to address barriers to early childhood education should reduce such barriers. Policies developed at the regional and school level should be in line with the national policy and vision statement on inclusive education as reflected in 7.2.1.1. A strong political will and commitment is crucial for the development and implementation of an inclusive early childhood education approach. The influence of policy development at the national level and its implementation should be understood in relation to their impact on curriculum development, implementation and on teaching. Improvements in policy development, including the training of teachers and the provision of resources to early childhood education centres, will benefit not only the early childhood education sector, but also the entire education sector and thus contribute to human development.

At the national level, the Ministry responsible for curriculum development is expected to develop: a **developmentally appropriate curriculum** which should take into consideration national policies so that it reflects the national needs of societies as pointed out in 7.2.4. This should be done in close collaboration with communities.

- ***At the level of the community***

The role of parents and communities cannot be overemphasised in enhancing an effective inclusive approach in early childhood education. An inclusive early childhood education centre should be able to tap resources from the community and these could be technical and financial. Section 7.2.9 provides guidelines on how the community can be involved in facilitating inclusive early childhood education. Schools are built within communities and problems being experienced by communities will spill over to schools. It is therefore important to engage communities in school activities and to tap the resources of communities in building up the schools.

- ***At the level of the school***

The early childhood education centre would be the best place to start addressing barriers to learning due to ignorance, inappropriate teaching and learning methods, irrelevant curricula or when the whole education system does not respond to the needs and lifestyles of the community at large. At the early childhood education level, the **management team** should be empowered to address and efficiently manage the development of an inclusive early childhood centre. There should be continued **communication** between the ministry responsible for education and that responsible for child welfare, as well as between parents and communities at large, to **promote a supportive teaching and learning inclusive environment**. Sections 7.2.5.1 and 7.2.9.1 indicate how management, parents and communities should collaborate to facilitate an inclusive ECD approach.

The early childhood education centres should fully accommodate diversity and be sufficiently flexible to provide an environment which is conducive to meeting the needs of individual learners.

Technical and other support services including financial resources should also be extended to early childhood education centres to facilitate effective inclusive education. Such support services could come from communities, parents and other professionals.

CHAPTER 8

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

8.1 INTRODUCTION

This Chapter provides a brief summary of the research study and the conclusions drawn from the findings. One of the reasons for undertaking a survey is the dearth of data on early childhood and inclusive education in Namibia. This research study was undertaken, not only to establish the situation concerning the provision of inclusive early childhood education but also to suggest guidelines to facilitate the implementation of high quality inclusive education throughout Namibia.

The following questions addressed in the study were guided by previous studies conducted internationally to examine the provisions of inclusive and early childhood education

1. What are the implications of the implementation of inclusive education for early childhood education both internationally as well as in Namibia?
2. What is the current situation in Namibia regarding the functioning of early childhood education centres with specific reference to the perceptions and preferences of early childhood educators in the overall process of educating children with special educational needs?
3. What guidelines could be offered to the ministries responsible for education and for the welfare of children for the development of an inclusive approach in early childhood education in Namibia?

8.2 BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

Inclusive education in early childhood education was discussed within a holistic ecosystemic rights approach to education. The study has confirmed the complex nature of inclusive education, which requires a paradigm shift, and the collaboration of schools and communities in order to make inclusion a success. It also confirmed that establishing welcoming schools does not necessarily mean expensive equipment and facilities but schools and communities that value diversity while supporting learning and development at the same time. The study revealed that early childhood education in Namibia is not inclusive and is faced with a number of challenges ranging from lack of policies and legislation on inclusive education, unqualified and inexperienced educators, lack of knowledge about the National Early Childhood Development Policy, lack of proper facilities to inform inclusive education as well as uncoordinated curriculum implementation.

Chapter 1 provided an introduction and a theoretical framework adopted for the study, while Chapters 2 and 3 formed the literature review. While stressing the pivotal role of education and the participation of all in the process of education, the review of the literature also discussed the challenges and barriers faced by communities to provide and education that responds to the needs and interests of all children and people in society.

Chapter 4 presented an in-depth discussion of the research design and methodology applied. A positivist research paradigm was used to study and analyse the situation of early childhood education in Namibia through the review of the literature and the design of a quantitative survey research method. Answers to the research questions were sought through the literature review and from the questionnaires distributed to early childhood educators in all 13 Educational Regions in Namibia. The survey was constructed in such a manner that the analysis could provide a framework for understanding pertinent factors that have an impact on inclusive early childhood education in Namibia. Chapter 5

discussed the results of the survey research, while Chapter 6 considered the implications of the result. In Chapter 7, guidelines for an effective implementation of an inclusive early childhood education approach in Namibia were recommended.

8.3 CONCLUSION

This study has highlighted a number of complexities and challenges in the field of early childhood and inclusive education, both at the national and international level. It discussed a number of important policy issues to ensure the right to education for all children in Namibia. The aim of the study was firstly, to assess the present educational issues, policies, practices, trends and needs of learners faced with barriers to early childhood education in Namibia and to provide guidelines for the development of inclusive early childhood education in Namibia.

Secondly, it sought to establish and clarify the barriers that many young children are faced with making them unwilling to participate in early children education in Namibia. The research study uncovered the complexity of understanding the concept of inclusive education and how it is perceived in early childhood education in Namibia.

The study concludes that inclusive education calls for welcoming schools and welcoming societies in which the cultures and diversities of individuals within schools and communities are valued. For inclusive education to be successful in Namibia, societies should be fully sensitised to the importance of allowing children with special needs to benefit from the same educational settings as those without special needs in education. Appropriate legislation, financial resources, curriculum reform and teacher education are very important means of facilitating inclusive education. Relevant and rigorous in-service teacher education and professional development should be provided as well as the necessary financial and human resources for early childhood education. Positive

attitudes between schools and communities, not simply on a narrow special needs front but within an ecosystemic approach, and ones that offer support services at all levels should be forged.

Concerning the research questions, addressed in Chapter 1, it is obvious that there are huge challenges in inclusive early childhood education in Namibia in particular, as well as internationally. Inclusive early childhood education in Namibia will not be an easy task. The education sector is presently faced with a number of challenges, including lack of resources. Inclusive education is a slow process. It requires, in addition to a considerable amount of commitment and careful planning, the entire reform of the education system as well as the change in societal perceptions about children with disabilities or those at risk in the entire education system. It calls for an inclusive culture that values and respects all learners and communities and an education system that is committed to promoting success amongst all learners.

Implications for inclusive early childhood education in Namibia are that the ministry responsible for education and the one responsible for the welfare of children need to provide the necessary machinery to ensure the effective provision of an inclusive early childhood education in Namibia.

With regard to the research question pertaining to the current situation regarding the functioning of early childhood education in Namibia and the preferences of early childhood education centres, it was obvious from the study that early childhood educators do not have the relevant teaching skills and experience. This is not only true with regard to ECD related issues but also in inclusive education. Although attitudes of some educators were positive towards the inclusive approach, many educators were opposed to inclusive education.

With regard to the provision of guidelines, the study has proposed guidelines for an effective implementation of an inclusive early childhood education approach for Namibia.

Finally, while parents are to be constantly sensitised about their responsibilities towards their children, the government is also called upon to play its part in the effective implementation of inclusive early childhood education so that Namibia becomes a knowledge based economy by 2030. It is the responsibility of the present generation to prepare the future generations for sustainable development.

8.4 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

One of the limitations of the study was the lack of literature available on inclusive education in Namibia in general and on early childhood education in Namibia in particular. Where data are available, mainly from Annual Reports and from Reports of Workshops, they mainly provide information on the number of early childhood education centres and to some extent on the provisions of ECD. As a result, the researcher based most of the review of the literature on international sources and on the few that were available. This study on its own cannot resolve the deep-rooted issues of access, quality, equity and educational opportunities for all children in early childhood education in Namibia. It however, serves to analyse, evaluate, document educational policies and practices and recommend ways of introducing an inclusive education approach in early childhood education in Namibia, taking into consideration the existing financial, socio-cultural and economic settings of the various communities. It also highlights the pivotal role of and the demand for quality education to inform a knowledge economy by 2030. Although the study focuses on an inclusive approach to early childhood education, it will also be of relevance to the provisions of basic education in Namibia.

It is very important that more research in early childhood education be conducted in order to suggest ways of improving the education system in Namibia. Although the questionnaires provided rich responses, the process was also very limited. It gave attention only to those aspects that would be able to inform the researcher

about the relevance of an inclusive curriculum and approach as well as the importance of teacher competencies and knowledge about special educational needs.

Limited knowledge about special needs education may have led to many respondents not to respond to the specific questions related to the identification of special needs in their classes and centres. It should also be pointed out that different research methods have their own limitations. Issues such as reliability, validity, objectivity and generalisability can be enhanced. The researcher found that administering a questionnaire was the most relevant approach to the present research as data could be obtained in a relatively short period of time compared to interviews.

8.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to the *Guidelines for an Inclusive Early Childhood Education Programme* recommended in Chapter 7, the following recommendations are also made.

8.5.1 National policy on inclusive education

Although Namibia is committed to attaining the education for all goals and the fact that the country is a signatory to the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action, Namibia does not have any policy or specific legislation on inclusive education. In addition, even though the country is a signatory to international conventions and declarations concerning the rights of all children to quality education and has adopted national policies on access to quality education for its children, inclusive education in early childhood education has not yet received its due. The National Policy on Disability of 1997 developed by the Ministry of Lands Resettlement and Rehabilitation has called for the Ministry of Basic Education,

Sports and Culture to make education inclusive so that it equally benefits children with disabilities in the country but it has not yet been fully implemented.

Legislation and policies are necessary in order to facilitate the process of inclusive education in Namibia in order to guarantee a rights approach to an inclusive early childhood education in Namibia. In the absence of necessary resources allocated to early childhood education, such legislation will also facilitate securing resources for an effective inclusive early childhood education approach.

It is recommended that the ministry dealing with education as well as that dealing with child welfare should collaborate in the development of an inclusive education policy covering all levels of the education sector from early childhood to tertiary and higher education. In countries such as the United States of America, New Zealand and South Africa where inclusive education has been legislated, efforts are being made to improve the quality of provision, especially with regard to human and material resources and teacher education and to involve the active participation of communities, especially parents in the education of their children. In planning for education for all, the Ministries responsible for education as well as for the welfare of children should thus transform the education system in order to ensure the provision of education for children experiencing barriers to learning in the same learning environments as their peers without special needs in education.

8.5.2 Curriculum reform

Evidence suggest that an inclusive early childhood education curriculum should be developmentally appropriate in order to address the individual needs of each child according to his or her cognitive, physical and emotional development. The research revealed that there was no specific national curriculum on early childhood education in Namibia and that early childhood education centres

implemented their own curriculum or programmes. There is a need to develop a national curriculum based on the needs of the country from which individual curriculum can be developed based on national guidelines. South Africa has introduced an outcome-based curriculum as a solution for inclusive education in that country. It is further recommended that curriculum reform be effected in order to ensure that the curriculum becomes inclusive and should reflect the needs of all children in the education setting and acknowledge individual differences as opportunities to learn rather than barriers to learning and participation.

8.5.3 Materials and Facilities to Support Inclusion

The research clearly evidenced the lack of or non-existence of adequate facilities and material resources, especially in rural areas to support an effective inclusive approach in Namibia. It was equally confirmed that early childhood education was the foundation for future learning and life long learning for any individual and has a great impact on success in education in general and in a child's future life in particular. Educational facilities and learning materials are crucial for the effective implementation of any inclusive education programme. The study additionally confirmed that few financial resources from the Government are channelled to early childhood education in Namibia. An effective inclusive early childhood education requires educational resources that positively contribute to the holistic development of the child. Education in general is expensive and inclusive education in particular will be expensive due to the nature of the services required to suit the needs of individual children. It is therefore recommended that efforts be made to ensure the provision of adequate resources and materials to early childhood education centres in order to facilitate learning and development. In addition to material and other resources to facilitate inclusive education, the approach also calls for smaller class sizes to support the provision of quality inclusive education. It is however also noted that smaller

sizes may remain a challenge in the Namibian education system, at least for some time to come.

8.5.4 Qualifications of Educators

Lack of qualified and trained inclusive education teachers, not only at the early childhood education level but also at the level of basic education was identified as one of the challenges facing the effective implementation of an inclusive education approach in Namibia. It is recommended that that the Colleges of Education and the University of Namibia offer specific Certificate, Diploma and Degree courses on inclusive education in general and inclusive early childhood education in particular. This would produce a large number of qualified teachers in that area to facilitate the implementation of inclusive education in Namibia. Professional teacher development through in-service education as well as distance education should also be promoted. So should participation in national and international meetings and conference on inclusive education in order to gain new information and knowledge on developments in that field. Another suggestion would be for primary school teachers to be trained in order to upgrade their primary school teachers' qualifications to early childhood education. It is further recommended that ALL early childhood educators be registered and their qualifications regulated through the National Qualifications Authority. It is equally important to recognise prior learning while those educators who need to upgrade their qualifications are encouraged through scholarships and bursaries.

The study revealed the serious lack of research specifically on ECD and inclusive early childhood education in Namibia. It is recommended that scholarships and opportunities be provided to young people who are interested in specialising in inclusive and early childhood education in order to build a pool of experts in this area. Namibians should therefore develop a culture of undertaking studies and research in all aspects of education, including inclusive education in the country.

It is only through research that Namibians will be informed about the successes and challenges facing the education systems and on various approaches and methodology to deal with such challenges.

The successful implementation of an early childhood education approach in Namibia will require the active participation and involvement of other experts. These experts should include speech and language therapists, sign language teachers, educational psychologist, physiotherapists which are currently lacking in Namibia, and school counsellors, who will be able to provide the necessary educational and other appropriate support services to the early childhood educator. It is therefore recommended that the services of such experts be extended to early childhood educators through the provision of training in these specialised areas. There is therefore a need for colleges of education and the University of Namibia, which are at present offering diploma and degree courses on education, to have appropriately qualified educators to offer those specialised courses.

In addition to qualifications and experiences, it is recognised that an inclusive education approach requires the educators to work with children experiencing barriers to education and learning to be fully committed and dedicated.

8.5.5 Financial Resources

The research revealed that investing in early childhood education contributes to human development and promotes a culture of lifelong learning. It also contributes to the fight against poverty. However, the study concluded that early childhood education in Namibia does not benefit from financial resources from the government. In general, it seems that a larger portion of the budgetary allocation to education is spent on basic rather than early childhood education. Parents and communities contribute financially through school fees and in to some extent donations are received from development partners and NGOs. This

practice means that urban ECD centres generally have the benefit of adequate resources while rural centres do not. This can be attributed to the fact that the majority of parents in rural areas are unemployed and possibly poor and cannot adequately contribute to their children's education compared to parents in urban areas. In order to avoid any disparities, the funding of early childhood education programmes should not be left entirely to parents and communities but should be a national responsibility, with the government playing a crucial role. It is therefore recommended that some government budgetary allocations be extended to the provisions of inclusive early childhood education. Inadequate financial resources in early childhood education will hinder the implementation of inclusive education and quality early childhood education. Some countries have introduced taxes and levies specifically for the benefit of early childhood education and Namibia could learn from them.

8.5.6 Parental and Community Involvement

The research revealed the benefits of learning through, not only the involvement of parents in the education of their children, but also through a wider social participation. There is a need to undertake wider advocacy on special needs and inclusive education in Namibia. There is still the misconception that children experiencing barriers to education and learning cannot be taught in mainstream education in some educational settings in Namibia. This can only be eradicated once parents and communities and the whole society accept children with special needs as having the same rights as those without the so-called special needs. The study further revealed that there was a low degree of parental involvement in early childhood education settings thus leaving the responsibility to the educators. The active participation of parents and communities in early childhood education is very important as it can provide opportunities to address children's special needs holistically in order to contribute to quality inclusive education. It is therefore recommended that parents be encouraged and sensitised to the importance of participating in the education of their young children so that their

children benefit from established partnerships between home, school and the community.

Finally, it is recommended that a family literacy programme be introduced to improve the literacy skills of those parents whose needs were not met by education in the past.

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ANNEXURE 1

QUESTIONNAIRE

***The Development of an Inclusive Approach in
Early Childhood Education in Namibia***

Questionnaire for Early Childhood Education Providers

**To be completed by the Head of the Centre and one member of
the Teaching Staff**

Aune Nangula Naanda

University of Stellenbosch

PhD (Specialised Education)

Questionnaire Number:	
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Filled in by Head of Centre. (Please tick with an (x):	
--	--

Filled in by Class Teacher. (Please tick with an (x):	
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Dear Respondent

Thank you for agreeing to complete the questionnaire. It is intended to obtain information on the provision of an inclusive approach in early childhood education in Namibia's early childhood education Centres.

The information you are providing would assist the researcher in developing an inclusive education model in early childhood education in Namibia and forms part of the researcher's PhD research studies at the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa.

Your assistance in completing this questionnaire as accurately as possible would be highly valued.

All information in this questionnaire will be treated strictly as CONFIDENTIAL and the results provided will only be used for the purpose of the research study.

Regards

Aune Naanda, Researcher

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Kindly read the questions very carefully before you answer them.
2. Answer ALL questions.
3. Please provide your own comments on the sections where additional comments are requested.
4. Do not write your name on the questionnaire.
5. Only tick one answer as requested by placing an (x) next to the correct answer.
6. Should you have any questions with regard to the questionnaire, kindly contact the researcher at Cell: 0811291225 or Telephone (061) 256394 after hours.
7. Kindly return your questionnaire to the Head/Coordinator at your Centre.

PART 1: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

This Section is aimed at obtaining data on the different types of centres currently providing early childhood education in Namibia.

1. Name of Centre:

2. In which region is the Centre situated? Please tick the correct answer with an (x).

a. Otjozondjupa	
b. Oshana	
c. Oshikoto	
d. Omaheke	
e. Omusati	
f. Karas	
g. Kunene	
h. Erongo	
i. Kavango	
j. Caprivi	
k. Hardap	
l. Ohangwena	
m. Khomas	

3. What is your current position in the Centre? Please tick the correct answer with an (x).

a. Head of Centre	
b. Deputy Head of Centre	
c. Class Teacher	

4. Type of Centre: Please tick the correct answer with an (x).

a. Community	
b. Church	
c. Private	
d. Government	
Other (please specify):	

5. Your gender

Male	
Female	

6. What is your home language?

a. English	
b. Afrikaans	
c. Oshiwambo	
d. Herero	
e. Khoekogowab (Damara>Nama)	
f. German	
g. Lozi	
h. Rukwangali	
Other (please specify):	

7. Your age group:

18 – 25	
26 – 35	
36 – 45	
46 – 55	
56 – 60	

8. Total number of years teaching experience:

1 – 5	
6 – 10	
11 – 15	
16 – 20	
20+	

9. What is your highest qualification? Please tick the appropriate box with an (x).

Less than Grade 12	
Grade 12	
Teachers Diploma	
Bachelor's Degree + Teacher's Diploma	
Other (please specify):	

10. Have you received any specialised training to teach children with special needs (e.g. children with disabilities)? Please tick the correct answer with an (x)

Yes	
No	

11. If YES to question 10, how long was the training?

Less than 1 year	
1 - 2 years	
3 - 4 years	

12. Is the Centre situated in an urban or rural area? Please tick the correct answer with an (x).

a. Urban	
b. Rural	

13. Number of children in your class:

a. Boys	
b. Girls	

14. Number of children identified as needing special attention in your class:

a. Boys	
b. Girls	

PART 2: THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE CENTRE

This section is aimed at obtaining data, on the physical environment of the centre regarding a safe, healthy environment, including: sufficient sanitation, water, safe school grounds and opportunities for physical education and recreation

1(a) Are there toilet facilities in the Centre?

Yes	
No	

1(b) If YES to question 1(a), please answer the following questions pertaining to toilets:

	Yes	No	Not sure
1. Are there adequate clean functioning toilets?			
2. Are the toilets flush?			
3. Are the toilets pit?			
4. Are there hand-washing facilities in the toilets?			
5. Is there soap provided in the toilets?			

2. Water facilities:

WATER

	Yes	No	Not sure
1. Is there regular water supply at the Centre?			
2. Is there safe water supply at the Centre?			

3. Space:

SPACE		Yes	No	Not sure
1.	Do the classrooms include adequate space for each child			
2.	Do the classrooms have comfortable furniture?			
3.	Is there enough space for children to play at the Centre?			
4.	Does the Centre have ramps for children with physical disabilities?			
Other (please specify):				

PART 3: PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED AT EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT CENTRES

This section is aimed at obtaining data to assist in providing an inclusive early childhood education in Namibia. Based on your knowledge of early childhood education, indicate the common education related problems you are faced with.

3(a) Which of the following special needs are encountered at your Centre?
Please tick correct answer with an (x).

EDUCATION PROBLEMS		Always	Often	Occasionally	Never	Not Sure
1.	Emotional behaviour					
2.	Physical disabilities					
3.	HIV/AIDS related problems					
4.	Child abuse					
5.	Poor vision					
6.	Lack of hearing					
7.	Limited speech					
8.	Learning difficulties					
9.	Constantly seeking attention					
10.	Child physically attacks others (hits, bites)					
11.	Child uses bad language with others					
12.	Child is withdrawn					
13.	Never plays with others in the playground					
14.	Displays inappropriate social behaviour					
15.	Other (please specify):					

3(b) Please indicate the number of boys and girls with specific special needs (as listed below) at your Centre.

Problems		Number of Boys	Number of Girls
1.	Emotional behaviours		
2.	Neglect		
3.	Physical abuse		
4.	Sexual abuse		
5.	Physical illness		
6.	Poverty		
7.	Homelessness		
8.	Disabilities		
Other (please list):			

3(c) Do any of the children with problems specified in 3(b) drop out of the Centre?

Control:

Yes	
No	

3(d) If YES to question 3(c), how many of these are boys and how many are girls? (Please state number):

Boys	
Girls	

3(e) What are the causes of dropping out? Please indicate the possible causes.

Causes of dropping out		Number of Boys	Number of Girls
1.	Emotional behaviours		
2.	Neglect		
3.	Physical abuse		
4.	Sexual abuse		
5.	Poverty		
6.	Homelessness		
7.	Disabilities		
Other (please list):			

3(f) Do you know of any children who live close to your Centre, who do not attend due to their special needs?

Yes	
No	

3(g) If the answer is YES to question 3(f), please indicate the nature of their special needs:

Causes of not attending		Number of Boys	Number of Girls
1.	Emotional behaviours		
2.	Neglect		
3.	Physical abuse		
4.	Sexual abuse		
5.	Poverty		
6.	Homelessness		
7.	Disabilities		
Other (please list):			

PART 4: CURRICULUM IN PLACE AT THE CENTRE

4 (a)

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION POLICIES	Yes	No	Not sure	Does not apply
1. Are you aware of an official National Early Childhood Development Policy in Namibia?				
2. Does your Centre have a specific policy that addresses the development of children?				
3. Are you aware of current policies that address the special needs of all learners in educational settings?				
Other (please specify):				

4(b) If YES to question 4(a)2, please explain the content of the Policy)

4(c) If NO to question 4(a)2, please explain why do you think that child development is not addressed at the Centre through the implementation of the policy?)

4(d) If YES to question 4(a)2, does the policy in place at the Centre encourage child development and learning?

4(e)

	Yes	No	Not sure	Don't know
1. Does the curriculum ensure the provision of a safe physical environment at the Centre?				
2. Does the curriculum ensure the provision of a healthy psychosocial environment in the Centre?				
3. Does the curriculum encourage all children, irrespective of their abilities to be taught in the same class setting?				
4. Does the curriculum make provision for children who are hearing impaired?				
5. Does the curriculum make provision for children who are visually impaired?				
6. Does the curriculum make provision for children who have physical disabilities?				
7. Does the curriculum make provision for children with emotional problems?				
8. The curriculum we are using at the Centre does not cater for an inclusive education approach in order to include all children.				

4(f)

TEACHING METHODS	Yes	No	Not sure	Don't know
1. Do you adapt your teaching methods in order to suit the learning needs of all children in your classroom?				
2. Do you prefer to teach children who need more attention in a separate group?				
3. Is there effective communication between teachers and learners?				
4. Do you prefer to teach children in smaller groups?				
5. Do you prefer to work with children individually?				

4(g)

TEACHING CHILDREN WITH DISSABILITIES	Yes	No	Not sure	Don't know
1. Do you think that children with disabilities should come to early childhood development Centre?				
2. Do you think that teaching children with disabilities in the same class with all other children helps to avoid stereotypes?				
3. Do you think that you can cope well with teaching children with various abilities?				
4. Do you think that it is good to teach children with various kinds of special needs together with children who do not have the same needs?				
5. Do you think that it is easy to teach a class with children from different language backgrounds?				
6. Do you have the right qualifications to teach children with different needs in education?				

4(h) How often do parents and teachers meet to discuss issues affecting the education of the children in your centre? Please tick the appropriate one with an (x)

More often	
Often	
Less often	
Never	

4(i) What support do you receive to help address the education and health concerns of children in your Centre? In particular, please describe any financial as well as technical support you receive from:

Source of Support	Financial	Technical	Material
1. Ministry of Women Affairs and Child Welfare			
2. Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture (e.g., financial support, curriculum materials, training teachers).			
3. Parents and community			
4. Private Sector			
5. Individuals			
6. Churches			
Other (please specify):			

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

ANNEXURE 2

MAP OF NAMIBIA

ANNEXURE 3

**DISABLED POPULATION BY AREA AND
SEX, NAMIBIA, 2001 CENSUS**

Table Disabled Population by area and sex, Namibia, 2001 Census

Area	Population			Disabled population			Percent Disabled		
	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male
Namibia	1 818 275	938 875	879 396	85 567	43 966	41 601	4.7	4.7	4.7
Urban	596 763	301 322	295 440	22 062	10 978	11 084	3.7	3.6	3.8
Rural	1 221 513	637 553	583 956	63 505	32 988	30 517	5.2	5.2	5.2
Caprivi	79 652	40 677	38 975	3 495	1 822	1 673	4.4	4.5	4.3
Erongo	105 294	49 704	55 590	3 779	1 846	1 933	3.6	3.7	3.5
Hardap	67 754	33 462	34 289	4 125	2 010	2 115	6.1	6.0	6.2
Karas	67 765	32 008	35 757	1 698	762	936	2.5	2.4	2.6
Kavango	201 651	105 744	95 907	11 045	5 663	5 382	5.5	5.4	5.6
Khomas	248 689	122 950	125 738	9 150	4 524	4 626	3.7	3.7	3.7
Kunene	67 476	33 739	33 737	3 125	1 515	1 610	4.6	4.5	4.8
Ohangwena	228 173	124 766	103 407	10 378	5 572	4 806	4.5	4.5	4.6
Omaheke	67 835	32 419	35 416	2 426	1 155	1 271	3.6	3.6	3.6
Omusati	227 993	126 088	101 905	14 572	8 092	6 480	6.4	6.4	6.4
Oshana	161 196	87 741	73 455	7 248	3 813	3 435	4.5	4.3	4.7
Oshikoto	160 086	84 300	75 786	8 607	4 416	4 191	5.4	5.2	5.5
Otjozondjupa	134 711	65 277	69 434	5 919	2 776	3 143	4.4	4.3	4.5

The table presents the disabled population by type of disability and sex. It can be observed that blindness is the most common type of disability in Namibia. It affects 35 percent of the disabled population. In females, it is 6 percent higher than in males, making it the disability type with the largest difference between the sexes. Impairment of legs, the second most common disability in Namibia, accounts for 24 percent of all disabilities. It is significantly higher in males than in females.

ANNEXURE 4

**POPULATION OF 3 – 6 YEARS ATTENDING
ECD IN NAMIBIA**

Population 3-6 years of age attending Early Childhood Development Programme
by area and sex, Namibia, 2001 Census.
Percent Attending.

